

lost wages. We can easily imagine the impact on a woman's life, as well as her children's.

I am proud to support these important measures which make the American promise of opportunity more accessible to women and to their families.

□ 0915

THE STATE AND LOCAL SALES TAX DEDUCTION EXPANSION ACT

(Mrs. BLACKBURN asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. Speaker, on the day following the President-elect's call for a new \$1 trillion spending package free from earmarks, House Democrats are bringing to the floor two bills that represent little more than an earmark for the trial bar.

Given the current state of the economy, it is inconceivable that Congress move forward with more ways to restrict the ability of honest employers to run their businesses. Instead, we need to focus our attention on stimulating the economy without earmarks for special interest groups. Congress can do this by providing tax cuts to spur investment on alternative energy—or how about first-time home purchases?—and implement commonsense tax changes like the State and Local Sales Tax Deduction Expansion Act, which I am introducing today.

These ideas will stimulate the economy immediately without hurting small businesses. It will be helping small businesses. Let's reject earmarks for the trial bar. Let's pass tax relief for working Americans and spur job growth.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Ms. TSONGAS). Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote is objected to under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later today.

RECOGNIZING ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO DEFEND ITSELF AGAINST ATTACKS FROM GAZA

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 34) recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 34

Whereas Hamas was founded with the stated goal of destroying the State of Israel;

Whereas Hamas has been designated by the United States as a Foreign Terrorist Organization;

Whereas Hamas has refused to comply with the Quartet's (the United States, the European Union, Russia, and the United Nations) requirements that Hamas recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence, and agree to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians;

Whereas in June 2006, Hamas illegally crossed into Israel, attacked Israeli forces, and kidnapped Corporal Gilad Shalit, whom they continue to hold today;

Whereas Hamas has launched thousands of rockets and mortars against Israeli population centers since 2001, and has launched more than 6,000 such rockets and mortars since Israel withdrew its civilian population and its military from Gaza in 2005;

Whereas Hamas has increased the range and payload of its rockets, reportedly with support from Iran and others, putting hundreds of thousands of Israelis in danger of rocket attacks from Gaza;

Whereas Hamas locates elements of its terrorist infrastructure in civilian population centers, thus using innocent civilians as human shields;

Whereas Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice said in a statement on December 27, 2008, that "We strongly condemn the repeated rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and hold Hamas responsible for breaking the cease-fire and for the renewal of violence there";

Whereas on December 27, 2008, Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert said, "For approximately seven years, hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens in the south have been suffering from missiles being fired at them . . . In such a situation we had no alternative but to respond. We do not rejoice in battle but neither will we be deterred from it . . . The operation in the Gaza Strip is designed, first and foremost, to bring about an improvement in the security reality for the residents of the south of the country";

Whereas the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including shortages of food, water, electricity, and adequate medical care, is becoming more acute;

Whereas Israel has facilitated humanitarian aid to Gaza with hundreds of trucks carrying humanitarian assistance and numerous ambulances entering the Gaza Strip since the current round of fighting began on December 27, 2008;

Whereas on January 6, 2009, before the United Nations Security Council, Secretary Rice stated that: "The situation before the current events in Gaza was clearly not sustainable. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis lived under the daily threat of rocket attack, and frankly, no country, none of our countries, would have been willing to tolerate such a circumstance. Moreover, the people of Gaza watched as insecurity and lawlessness increased and as their living conditions grew more dire because of Hamas's actions which began with the illegal coup against the Palestinian Authority in Gaza. . . . A ceasefire that returns to those circumstances is unacceptable and it will not last"; and

Whereas the ultimate goal of the United States is a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will ensure the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and a viable, independent, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) expresses vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish

and democratic state with secure borders, and recognizes its right to act in self-defense to protect its citizens against Hamas's unceasing aggression, as enshrined in the United Nations Charter;

(2) reiterates that Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel, recognize Israel's right to exist, renounce violence, agree to accept previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians, and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure;

(3) encourages the Administration to work actively to support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, as soon as possible, that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding its terrorist infrastructure, including the capability to launch rockets and mortars against Israel, and thereby allowing for the long-term improvement of daily living conditions for the people of Gaza;

(4) believes strongly that the lives of innocent civilians must be protected to the maximum extent possible, expresses condolences to innocent Palestinian and Israeli victims and their families, and reiterates that humanitarian needs in Gaza should be addressed promptly and responsibly;

(5) calls on all nations—

(A) to condemn Hamas for deliberately embedding its fighters, leaders, and weapons in private homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, and otherwise using Palestinian civilians as human shields, while simultaneously targeting Israeli civilians; and

(B) to lay blame both for the breaking of the "calm" and for subsequent civilian casualties in Gaza precisely where blame belongs, that is, on Hamas;

(6) supports and encourages efforts to diminish the appeal and influence of extremists in the Palestinian territories, and strengthens moderate Palestinians who are committed to a secure and lasting peace with Israel;

(7) calls on Egypt to intensify its efforts to halt smuggling between Gaza and Egypt and affirms the willingness of the United States to continue to assist Egypt in these efforts;

(8) calls for the immediate release of the kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit, who has been illegally held in Gaza since June 2006; and

(9) reiterates its strong support for a just and sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict achieved through negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority in order to ensure the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and a viable, independent, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) and the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROSEHTINEN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. BERMAN. I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on the resolution under consideration.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself 2 minutes.

When a nation's towns and villages are attacked without provocation by nearly 9,000 rockets over the span of 8 years, there could hardly be a more solid case for the use of force in self-defense. At least 700,000 Israelis, 10 percent of that small nation, are now within range of missiles and rockets operated by an Islamist terrorist group committed to Israel's destruction.

I have no trouble justifying the war Israel is undertaking, but I am deeply troubled by the suffering, destruction and loss of innocent life that war inevitably entails, in this case, a war forced upon Israel by a terrorist enemy that not only targets Israeli civilians but that also bases itself among Gazan Palestinian homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals in order to use innocent civilians as human shields and as tools of a propaganda war. It is imperative that a way be found to stop the killing on both sides but in a manner that will ensure that this round will be the last round.

I know the U.S. and several other nations are working on developing such a plan. Our ally Egypt should be particularly commended for its serious efforts in this regard.

What we need is not merely a cease-fire but a transformative cease-fire. We need to ensure not just that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel; we need to make sure that it stops receiving weapons and weapons parts and that it stops smuggling them into the Gaza Strip. We should support Egyptian efforts to prevent this illegal arms trade from crossing the Sinai toward the Gaza border.

Madam Speaker, I commend the Speaker and the bipartisan leadership for authoring this important resolution. It provides a sensible way of understanding how we got to the current situation and of how we should move forward. This is why I support this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do likewise.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself as much time as I may consume.

(Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN asked and was given permission to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I rise in strong support of House Resolution 34, recognizing Israel's right to defend herself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel.

Madam Speaker, the conflict between Israel and violent Palestinian extremist groups is not, to paraphrase Chamberlain, a quarrel in a faraway country between people of which we know nothing. This conflict is one part of a broader struggle that we're all engaged in, a struggle between liberty and tyranny, between democracy and violent Islamic extremism, between those who love life and those who preach death.

It is a struggle Israel did not seek but one which she must, nonetheless, fight and win. For 8 years, while Israel

has sought just and lasting peace and security, Hamas and other Islamic militants have launched thousands of rockets from Gaza against innocents in southern Israel. Israel, a democratic state, chose to exercise remarkable restraint.

Finally, on December 19, Hamas unilaterally broke the calm, the so-called calm, and began launching scores of rockets against Israel. Israel chose to protect itself and her people. Israel has made every effort to prevent civilian casualties and has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians. Meanwhile, Hamas has again committed war crimes by placing its militants and its weapons in or at schools, in hospitals, in private homes, and in other civilian buildings.

How has much of the world reacted? Too many states and too many officials in the United Nations have responded by blaming Israel and only Israel. The U.N. swung into action, holding four Security Council meetings in less than 2 weeks, including last night, when it passed a resolution that did not even mention rocket attacks against innocent Israeli civilians, that did not even mention Hamas and its war crimes, and it called for an immediate cease-fire, not a sustainable cease-fire.

Sadly, these officials do not recognize that only Israel would consider itself bound by such an agreement. Hamas would continue to pursue Israel's destruction, and such a devil's bargain without holding Hamas and its state sponsors of terror accountable will only embolden these Islamic extremists to intensify their destructive agenda.

The desire to stop all violence now is understandable. We all desire peace. We all regret the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the conflict, but as the ancient rabbis have stated, those who are merciful to the cruel, as the U.N. has been, will end up being cruel to the merciful, in this case, Israel.

The right way forward is not easy; it is not pleasant, but upon it rests the security of the Israelis, of the Palestinians, of the Americans, and of all freedom-loving people.

The following is my full statement for the RECORD: Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 34, recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirming the United States's strong support for Israel.

Madam Speaker, the conflict between Israel and violent Palestinian extremist groups is not, to paraphrase former British leader Neville Chamberlain, a quarrel in a faraway country, between people of which we know nothing.

On the contrary, this conflict is one part of a broader struggle that we are all engaged in—a struggle between liberty and tyranny; between democracy and violent Islamist extremism; between those who love life and those who preach death.

It is a struggle which the United States and Israel did not seek, but which we must, nonetheless, fight and win.

On the outcome, rests our freedom, our security, and our very existence.

Today, this House sends a strong and unequivocal signal that America stands with Israel in its fight to exist.

To some of the "high-minded" who feel comfortably removed from this struggle, such language is old-fashioned, or out of style, or undiplomatic.

In the United States, Madam Speaker, we prefer to call it the truth.

For 8 years, while Israel has sought just and lasting peace and security, Hamas and other Islamist militants have launched over 8,000 rockets from Gaza against innocents in southern Israel.

Even after Israel took the risk of withdrawing from Gaza in 2005, Hamas rejected peace and chose to use its new sanctuary to plan and carry out more attacks against the Jewish state and its people.

Six months ago, Hamas agreed to a so-called state of "calm," then proceeded to break it repeatedly by using other groups to do its dirty work and fire rockets.

Israel, a democratic state, chose to exercise remarkable restraint.

Finally, on December 19, Hamas unilaterally broke the "calm" and began launching scores of rockets into Israel.

Israel chose to protect its people and defend itself.

Hamas and its fellow violent hate-mongers do not seek a few more square miles of land. They do not seek a Palestinian state.

They seek to destroy Israel, impose an Islamist dictatorship in its place, and fight on throughout the world.

Such an outcome is unacceptable to Israel. It is unacceptable to the United States.

It must be unacceptable to all other responsible nations—because in a compromise between good and evil, only evil benefits.

Israel has made every effort to prevent civilian casualties, and has provided significant humanitarian assistance to Palestinian civilians.

Meanwhile, Hamas has again committed war crimes by placing its militants and weapons, in or near schools, hospitals, private homes, and other civilian buildings.

In the real world, Hamas's use of civilians as human shields would provoke international condemnation and action to stop this menace.

But how has much of the world reacted?

Too many states, and too many officials at the United Nations, have responded by blaming Israel and only Israel.

Let us remember that in the months and years before Israel started its defensive operation on December 27, the U.N. did not make any meaningful effort to stop the relentless attacks by Hamas or diminish the threat posed by its state sponsors.

But once Israel rose to protect its citizens, the U.N. swung into action, holding four Security Council meetings in less than two weeks, including last night, when it passed a resolution—that did not even mention rocket attacks against Israeli civilians; that did not even mention Hamas and its war crimes; and that called for an immediate ceasefire, not a sustainable ceasefire.

This Security Council resolution and other developments throughout the U.N. system, reflect the short-sightedness and bias that pervade that body.

The so-called President of the U.N. General Assembly called Israel's behavior a "monstrosity," and the Secretary-General called for an immediate cease-fire.

Sadly, they do not recognize: that only Israel would consider itself bound by such an agreement; that Hamas would continue to pursue Israel's destruction; and that such a devil's bargain without holding Hamas and its state-sponsors accountable would only embolden these Islamist extremists to intensify their destructive agenda.

The desire to stop all violence now is understandable.

We all desire peace and regret the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the conflict.

But as the ancient rabbis stated, those who are merciful to the cruel (as the U.N. has been) will end up being cruel to the merciful (in this case, Israel).

If the U.N. wants to regain its credibility, it should advance peace and security by moving to compel Hamas and their state sponsors to: immediately stop their attacks, shut down their militant infrastructure, and recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state.

Madam Speaker, we've been here before.

In 2006, the violent extremist group Hezbollah kidnapped Israeli soldiers and fired rockets relentlessly against northern Israel.

In response, the U.N. Security Council passed a resolution calling for a ceasefire between Israel and the violent extremist group Hezbollah, which would supposedly strengthen the ability of a U.N. force in Lebanon to prevent Hezbollah from rearming.

In the last 2½ years, Israel has held up its end of the deal, while a legitimized Hezbollah has rapidly re-armed under the U.N.'s nose and has, along with its state-sponsors Iran and Syria, increased its control in Lebanon.

As a result, U.S. interests in the region have been damaged.

If we act the same way this time, we will get the same result or worse, and we are running out of second chances. Not again, Madam Speaker.

We must support Israel's right to defend itself by rooting out the Islamist militant infrastructure in Gaza and by ending—not reducing, not postponing, but ending—the threat Hamas poses to Israel's existence; to regional stability; and to global peace and security.

Then, and only then, Madam Speaker, can a ceasefire work.

Consistent with the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, we should also tighten U.S. and international sanctions against Hamas.

Additionally, the U.S. and our allies must seek to stop Iran and Syria from providing financial and other support to Hamas and other violent Islamist extremist groups.

The right way forward is not easy or pleasant, but upon it rests the security of Israelis, Palestinians, Americans, and all other peoples.

With that, Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of our time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to recognize the chief sponsor and author of this resolution, the Speaker of the House, Ms. PELOSI, for 1 minute.

Ms. PELOSI. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I commend him, Mr. BERMAN, the Chair of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and Congresswoman ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN for bringing this resolution before us today. I am pleased to join Mr. BOEHNER and Mr. HOYER in co-sponsoring it.

Today, we have reaffirmed with this resolution that Israel, like any nation, has a right to defend itself when under attack. Protecting the people of our country is the first responsibility any of us has, and so has Israel. The rocket and mortar attacks from Hamas in Gaza, which were increasing in frequency and in range, constituted an unacceptable security threat to which Israel had a responsibility to respond.

Certainly, all of us regret the loss of life, injury and destruction of property of innocent civilians that has occurred on both sides of the conflict. When I spoke with Prime Minister Olmert last week, I conveyed the concerns of my constituents and of my colleagues about the loss of life among civilians. We must do all we can to relieve the pain of the innocents and to bring about a real peace that will avoid further loss of life on both sides.

If we are to achieve a real peace, we must begin with a cease-fire to the current conflict. Hamas must stop the attacks, which is why this resolution calls for the Bush administration to work toward that end, but a cease-fire must do more than just end the current fighting. It must address some of the root causes of the conflict so we may attain a peace that is, in the words of this resolution, "durable and sustainable."

Security for Israel and an improvement in the lives of the people of Gaza cannot be achieved as long as Hamas uses that impoverished land as a launching pad for attacks against Israelis. The goal of any cease-fire must be more than a return to the status quo. It must be a positive and measurable step toward a final, just resolution of the differences between Palestinians and Israelis.

Our goal must be to achieve an agreement between Palestinians and Israelis that results in a secure, democratic Israel, living side by side with a viable and independent Palestinian state and with both sides finding peace and prosperity. The cycle of violence that feeds the fury of despair must be broken. The hard work of negotiation must be done, and the difficult but necessary decisions must be made so that such an agreement can be achieved.

The United States must be an active, constant and engaged partner in this conflict. With the new energy and fresh thinking of the new administration, we pray that an enduring settlement can be reached.

On days like this, Madam Speaker, and with the resolution that we have before us, we are all reminded that for more than 60 years the commitment of the United States to the security of Israel has been a real one. From the moment in 1947 when President Harry S. Truman took the bold step of recognizing the State of Israel to this very day, America stands shoulder to shoulder with our democratic ally in the Middle East.

We want, as I said, a two-state solution with a Jewish democratic Israel

side by side with a secure Palestinian state. That can only occur if Hamas stops the exploitation of the impoverished people of Gaza for its own purposes as it continues its attacks on Israel.

Again, I thank the chairman of the committee, Mr. BERMAN, and the ranking member, Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, for their leadership in bringing this resolution to the floor.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from North Carolina, Congresswoman VIRGINIA FOXX.

Ms. FOXX. The main goal of any democratic nation is to ensure the safety and prosperity of its people.

As we all know, Israel has commenced defensive military actions in Gaza aimed at disrupting Hamas' weaponizing capabilities which are being used to terrorize Israeli civilians. Unlike the indiscriminate rocket attacks launched by Hamas, Israel's precision strikes are a defensive last resort necessary to protect her people.

Considering that since Israel's 2005 withdrawal from Gaza Hamas, with the help of Iran, has openly fired more than 6,300 rockets and mortars at Israeli population centers with more than 1,000 of these having been fired within the past month, it's clear that the Israeli Government is taking a measured response that any other responsible country would expect to take in defending its sovereignty. I think that we have to do everything that we possibly can in this country to lend our support to Israel in her defense of the people of Israel, and I want to lend my support to this resolution.

□ 0930

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 1 minute to the chairman of the European Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. WEXLER).

Mr. WEXLER. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution which expresses Congress' unwavering support for Israel and its unequivocal right to self-defense in the face of an ongoing campaign of terror perpetrated by Hamas.

The world must know that America stands shoulder-to-shoulder with Israel in its ongoing struggle for security and peace. All of us wish to see a stable, secure, and peaceful Middle East, and we mourn for the loss of innocent lives. But it is unconscionable to expect the Israeli Government or any government to sit idly by as deadly rockets rain down on its cities.

The world must recognize how we came upon the deadly circumstances that exist in Gaza now. It was Hamas, not Israel, that abrogated the so-called truce by firing rockets into Israel. Instead of using violence to achieve its destructive goals, Hamas must adhere to the international principles established by the Quartet.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution and support

Israel's right to self-defense so that we can move toward a more peaceful Middle East. But peace comes with strength and resolve; it does not come by avoiding the unfortunate circumstances that Hamas, not Israel, has placed this region in once again.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Texas (Mr. PAUL).

(Mr. PAUL asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution, not because I am taking sides and picking who the bad guys are and who the good guys are, but I'm looking at this more from the angle of being a United States citizen, an American, and I think resolutions like this really do great harm to us.

In many ways what is happening in the Middle East, and in particular with Gaza right now, we have some moral responsibility for both sides, because we provide help in funding for both Arab nations and Israel. And so we definitely have a moral responsibility. And especially now today, the weapons being used to kill so many Palestinians are American weapons and American funds essentially are being used for this.

But there is a political liability which I think is something that we fail to look at because too often there is so much blowback from our intervention in areas that we shouldn't be involved in.

Hamas, if you look at the history, you will find that Hamas was encouraged and actually started by Israel because they wanted Hamas to counteract Yasir Arafat. You say, Well, yeah, it was better then and served its purpose, but we didn't want Hamas to do this.

So then we, as Americans, say, Well, we have such a good system; we're going to impose this on the world. We're going to invade Iraq and teach people how to be democrats. We want free elections. So we encouraged the Palestinians to have a free election. They do, and they elect Hamas.

So we first, indirectly and directly through Israel, helped establish Hamas. Then we have an election where Hamas becomes dominant then we have to kill them. It just doesn't make sense.

During the 1980s, we were allied with Osama bin Laden and we were contending with the Soviets. It was at that time our CIA thought it was good if we radicalize the Muslim world. So we finance the Madrassas school to radicalize the Muslims in order to compete with the Soviets.

There is too much blowback. There are a lot of reasons why we should oppose this resolution. It's not in the interest of the United States, it is not in the interest of Israel either.

I strongly oppose H. Res. 34, which was rushed to the floor with almost no prior notice and without consideration by the House Foreign Affairs Committee. The resolution clearly

takes one side in a conflict that has nothing to do with the United States or U.S. interests. I am concerned that the weapons currently being used by Israel against the Palestinians in Gaza are made in America and paid for by American taxpayers. What will adopting this resolution do to the perception of the United States in the Muslim and Arab world? What kind of blowback might we see from this? What moral responsibility do we have for the violence in Israel and Gaza after having provided so much military support to one side?

As an opponent of all violence, I am appalled by the practice of lobbing homemade rockets into Israel from Gaza. I am only grateful that, because of the primitive nature of these weapons, there have been so few casualties among innocent Israelis. But I am also appalled by the longstanding Israeli blockade of Gaza—a cruel act of war—and the tremendous loss of life that has resulted from the latest Israeli attack that started last month.

There are now an estimated 700 dead Palestinians, most of whom are civilians. Many innocent children are among the dead. While the shooting of rockets into Israel is inexcusable, the violent actions of some people in Gaza does not justify killing Palestinians on this scale. Such collective punishment is immoral. At the very least, the U.S. Congress should not be loudly proclaiming its support for the Israeli government's actions in Gaza.

Madam Speaker, this resolution will do nothing to reduce the fighting and bloodshed in the Middle East. The resolution in fact will lead the U.S. to become further involved in this conflict, promising "vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare, security, and survival of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state." Is it really in the interest of the United States to guarantee the survival of any foreign country? I believe it would be better to focus on the security and survival of the United States, the Constitution of which my colleagues and I swore to defend just this week at the beginning of the 111th Congress. I urge my colleagues to reject this resolution.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlewoman from California (Mrs. CAPPS).

Mrs. CAPPS. I thank my colleague for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I will vote for this resolution today, but I'm disappointed that we are doing, once again, what we've done so often. Of course we all condemn Hamas and support Israel, but we should be saying and doing so much more. I applaud the statements of the chairman and of our Speaker, and I wish they were part of the resolution.

We must call for greater U.S. engagement to achieve a durable cease-fire and to restart the Israel-Palestinian peace process. We all know the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will never be settled militarily. My fear is that this action by Israel, justified as it is and provoked by Hamas, will not enhance Israel's security but only further endanger it.

Achieving peace in the Middle East is in Israel's best interest, and it is in America's best interest; but the violence that now permeates Gaza only puts off the serious and difficult work of diplomacy that is a predicate to peace, and it obscures the remarkable

progress that is even now being made in the West Bank. And in the meantime, the humanitarian crisis in Gaza has grown to unspeakable proportions, and millions of innocent Palestinians and Israelis are suffering.

I urge my colleagues not only to make statements of support for Israel but to call for a cease-fire and to press for peace.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Texas who says, "That's just the way it is," Judge POE.

Mr. POE of Texas. I thank the gentlelady for yielding.

Madam Speaker, Hamas is a rogue group of outlaws that hibernate in Palestinian civilian areas of Gaza and fire Iranian missiles into Israel. Israel has received hundreds of these missile attacks in the last few days, thousands in the last few years.

Israel has been patient, maybe overly patient. Make no mistake about it, Hamas is the aggressor. So Israel not only has the right but moral obligation to defend its people by fighting back.

You see, Hamas is one of the two twin tribes of terror that operate in the Middle East. The other being Hezbollah. These bandits operate in the Middle East with the sole purpose to kill Israelis. Hamas murders in the name of religious hatred for Jews and Israel. Israel defends itself while some world leaders criticize Israel for doing so. These world leaders, especially those in the United Nations, are out of touch with the way the world really is. The Middle East is in turmoil because of terror groups like Hamas, and they are the aggressor.

The recent aggression by Hamas is no doubt sponsored by the little fellow from Iran, Mahmoud Ahmadinejad. He is the real world threat to peace in the Middle East. He has openly stated that Israel must be completely destroyed. And eventually, world leaders must deal with this issue. But people cry "peace, peace—peace at any price", but there can be no peace as long as Hamas continues to murder Israelis.

Israel is our ally. The United States should stand by its allies. Israel is defending its people. It is obligated to do so, and I commend them for representing and defending their people.

And that's just the way it is.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from California (Ms. HARMAN), who is very active on these issues.

Ms. HARMAN. I thank the gentleman for yielding and commend him on bringing up this resolution so promptly.

Madam Speaker, I've seen Israel up close and personal on almost two dozen trips. I've seen thousands of spent missiles stockpiled in Sderot, witnessed destruction of homes and buildings, and know a government official from Israel who was seriously wounded. I have also spent time on Israel's border with Lebanon, including a trip there

during the 2006 Hezbollah war while rockets flew overhead.

Israel, indeed any country, has a right to defend herself from attack. The U.S. must stand by our only democratic ally in the Middle East. Hamas' ability to strike Israeli cities is continuing evidence that it has been receiving illicit arms for use against Israel—no doubt with the complicity of its sponsors in Iran.

However, Israelis are not the only victims. The Palestinian people in Gaza and the West Bank have paid a huge price, too. They have been held hostage by the Hamas leadership since its 2006 coup against the Palestinian authority. And they are being used as human shields.

That said, Israel's effort must minimize civilian casualties and maximize Red Cross access. Measures to permit humanitarian aid must be sustained.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentlewoman has expired.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentlelady an additional 10 seconds.

Ms. HARMAN. As this resolution states, our President must work actively to support a durable, enforceable, and sustainable cease-fire, promote a two-state solution, and encourage and strengthen moderate Palestinian voices.

This House is doing its part today. Following Senate action yesterday, we signal bipartisan, bicameral support for this effort.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to yield 5 minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR), our distinguished Republican whip.

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentlelady.

Madam Speaker, colleagues, I don't think there is any of us who would doubt a nation's right to defend its citizens and to defend its population. That's why I rise in support of this resolution. I thank the sponsors, the gentleman from California, the gentlelady from Florida, for bringing this forward.

At this time it is very, very important for us in the United States to stand tall in defense of our democratic allies, Israel's right to defend its borders, to defend its people.

I stand here in support of Israel because I have been there. I've seen Sderot. One of the most memorable visits to Israel that I've been on, I visited with a family, a family that lived in a town called Gush Katif. It was a town in the southern portion of the Gaza Strip. I visited with them almost 3½ years ago when it was just after Israel's unilateral pullout of the Gaza Strip.

This family had two children, parents—professional parents—who had just gone through the wrenching process of uprooting their family, leaving their home, in hopes of a better life. The parents said to me one of the most difficult jobs was to explain to their children why they needed to leave their life and their home. These parents said

they told their children they were going to leave because they needed to be sure that Israel had every chance imaginable for peace so they could leave in peace.

I actually cannot imagine what those parents are going through now. Three-and-a-half years later they've settled in the area of Sderot, and life could not be any more frightening for them or their children.

When they moved out of the Gaza Strip, they joined the group of citizens of Israel who have to live by the 15-second rule. They have to know, their children have to know, where a safe spot is within 15 seconds of a siren going off. That's the unimaginable fear that they live in day in and day out. Even when these people take vacation and leave Israel, their children, immediately upon arriving at their destination, ask the question, Where is the safe place? Where do I need to run and hide from the rockets?

That's the mentality. That's the culture that has bred because of the incessant, tireless firing of rockets by Hamas aimed at civilians.

Madam Speaker, that is the issue. Israel has a foe on many of its borders, certainly to the south, that is determined to kill its civilians. I don't think any of us would want any of our population in this country to be subjected to that type of terror, nor would we sit here and allow it. That's why Israel has taken the action that it has.

□ 0945

After trying to stop the rockets through third-party negotiations, cease-fires, and even lodging complaints at the United Nations, Israel has taken defensive action. And today, we speak as one body in support of our democratic ally, Israel. We stand up to reaffirm the vibrant relationship that our two countries share, a relationship underpinned by shared values like respect for human life, democracy, and a relationship strengthened by our indispensable strategic interests.

Mr. BERMAN. I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the chairman of the Democratic Caucus, the gentleman from South Carolina (Mr. CLYBURN).

(Mr. CLYBURN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. CLYBURN. I appreciate the gentleman yielding me the time.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support as an original cosponsor of H. Res. 34, which recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Hamas terrorists in Gaza and reaffirms the United States' strong support for Israel.

Since Israel unilaterally withdrew from Gaza in 2005, the Hamas terrorist organization has launched thousands of missile attacks against Israeli civilian targets.

I mourn the loss of life on both sides of this conflict, including the innocent Palestinians who have cynically and deliberately been used by Hamas terrorists as human shields.

In order to end the violence in Gaza, Hamas needs to recognize Israel's right to exist and renounce terror. As the only true democracy in the Middle East, the 111th Congress recognizes Israel's struggle to protect its people, maintain peace with its neighbors, and defend the freedoms of a democratic society.

I encourage all of my colleagues to support this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, at this time, I would like to yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE), a senior member of the Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. ROYCE. I thank the gentlelady.

I would just like to quote for a minute from Hamas. They say Allah is the goal, the Prophet its model, the Quran its constitution, jihad its path, and death for the cause of Allah its most sublime belief. Now, that is the charter; that is the opening of the charter for Hamas itself. These are the words that drive these ideological jihadists. And it's an offshoot of the Muslim Brotherhood, which was the Egyptian group whose ideology actually spawned al Qaeda. So Hamas, in this case, as we know, wants to replace Israel and wants to replace it with an Islamic state.

Now, Israel withdrew its soldiers and all of its settlers from Gaza in 2005, and in return Hamas came to power in the Gaza Strip. Over 6,000 rockets have been fired into southern Israel, leaving a quarter of a million Israelis just seconds away from a rocket attack. And I wonder how Americans would feel if citizens in San Diego or in Buffalo had a matter of 20 seconds to rush to a bomb shelter.

I had an opportunity in August, a year and a half ago, back when rockets like these were being fired into Haifa, to see the results of that targeting of civilian neighbors. And I was in Rambam Hospital, and indeed on that very day there were attacks on the city; 80,000 ball bearings in each one of these rockets designed to inflict maximum casualties on the civilians, and this is what Israel faces. And of course Israel has been harshly criticized for its so-called disproportionate response. But what is proportional? Should Israel fire 6,000 rockets into Gaza indiscriminately? Israel would not do that. On the contrary, it seems as though Israel has gone out of its way to even contact noncombatants who live next to the rocket launchers in advance to warn them of approaching danger.

Hamas has been deliberate in the locating of its security forces in residential neighborhoods. They put these rocket launchers in areas that are intended both to deter Israel from attacking in the first place, as well as to turn world opinion against the democratic state when it does try to silence with counter-battery fire these rockets.

Madam Speaker, no one wants to see human suffering. I would like to see this come to an end. And the longer

this goes on with Hamas, the longer international attention will be taken away from the even more serious threat of Iran's nuclear program. More delays in terms of taking out Hamas only work in favor of the Islamic state over in Iran at this point, and they are helping provide the rockets.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the majority leader for the House of Representatives, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

(Mr. HOYER asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. HOYER. I thank the gentleman from California and I thank the gentlelady from Florida for bringing this resolution to the floor.

Today the House will stand in support of Israel as it faces enemies bent on its destruction.

For 8 years, Hamas, aided by Iran and others, has sent deadly rockets and mortars into Israel; so many have already talked about that. In 2005, Israel dismantled its settlements and withdrew its military from Gaza, and still the rockets came, more than 6,000, as has been related, since Israel's withdrawal.

I was in Israel on August 15 of 2005 with a delegation, a meeting with Ariel Sharon. It was a courageous act that the Israelis took; it was a controversial act that the Israelis took. It took great political courage to do what the Israelis did. And there were many citizens in that democracy that demonstrated against that action because they feared what would happen is what is happening now. Each one of them, the rockets that have been sent, those 6,000—intended to kill the maximum number of civilians and falling indiscriminately on southern Israel cities and towns—was a war crime by any definition. Mr. ROYCE spoke of that, as to what our response would be if Mexico or Canada—which obviously has not done so nor would they—but if they did that, what our own citizens would demand of us. Mexico would not exist, nor would Canada, quite simply put. We would not tolerate, and no amount of criticism leveled on us would in any way modify our response.

The harm of these missiles is undeniable, I've seen it firsthand. When I traveled to the southern Israel town of Sderot, I met families whose children had lost the ability to speak, who no longer had control of their bodily functions. That is the profound and ever-present fear that covers much of Israel today.

Let us be quick to intone, however, our sympathy for the children and for the families of the Palestinians living in Gaza. Let us not forget that the problem with these conflicts is that it is the innocent who suffer the most. How tragic it is, I believe, that for over six decades the Palestinian people have been led by those who rationalize the use of terror and rationalize the premise of the destruction of Israel, es-

tablished by the United Nations of the world. How tragic it is that the Palestinians have not had among their number a Gandhi, a Mandela, a Martin Luther King, Jr., who said the way to solve this problem is not through terror and violence, but the way to solve this problem is through reason and an appeal to moral suasion in the world community. How tragic it is that the Palestinian children and the Israeli children and their families—men, women, older people—on both sides have been subjected to the terror sold by Hamas, Hezbollah and other terrorist organizations. But the reality exists today that Hamas is in control and is threatening, and that is the danger that Israel nor any nation could endure.

As Secretary Rice said last week, and I quote, "Hamas has held the people of Gaza hostage ever since their illegal coup against the legitimate President of the Palestinian people." To the Hamas terrorists, the ordinary people of Gaza are not fellow citizens, but all too often propaganda props.

As reporter Jeffrey Goldberg writes, and I quote, "Hamas terrorists unblinkingly and ostentatiously use their own civilians as human shields. I have seen this up close, and it's repulsive."

For Hamas, the lives of Palestinians are valued as cheaply as the lives of Israelis. How sad it is for both those people. Having exhausted diplomatic options and confronted with an enemy sworn to its destruction, Israel has been given no choice but to take military action in order to relieve the threat against its people.

How sad it is, my fellow colleagues, that the international community responds strongly today, but has failed to respond strongly to the decades of terrorism visited on Israel—and yes, visited on the United States—by those who employ terror and destruction and murder against innocence.

By offering this resolution, we recognize Israel's right to act in self-defense as we claim for ourselves and for every nation of the world—that same right claimed by America and any other sovereign nation when faced with a similar threat.

We urge both sides to protect the lives of civilians. I believe the Israelis are trying to do that, and they have always tried to do that. It is demonstrably true that that is not true of Hamas or Hezbollah or other similar terrorist organizations.

We urge the administration to work towards a durable—and that is the operative word, "a durable," not a temporary cessation, not a 5-minute or 5-day or even 5-month cessation from terror—but a durable, sustained cessation of the terror, a durable ceasefire that puts an end to the fighting and to its cause—Hamas' ability to threaten Israel and to produce the weapons of terror.

Only when Israel's enemies forswear violence and recognize Israel's right to

exist will we be any closer to a just and lasting peace, which the people need. And when I say the people need that, I don't mean the Palestinian people or the Israeli people, but the people need on both sides of the line, but which Hamas, Hezbollah, Islamic Jihad and other such terrorist groups have refused for decades now to take place, a peace in which the Palestinian and Israeli people can live in their own states side by side. That is our objective, that is the objective of this resolution. Let us stand with Israel's right to defend itself and its people and defeat terror.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am proud to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. PENCE), our distinguished Republican Conference chairman.

(Mr. PENCE asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. PENCE. Madam Speaker, for a millennia, Israel was a dream; in 1948, it became a reality. But in recent days, the periphery of Gaza has become a nightmare for Israeli men, women and children.

I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 34, a bipartisan measure which recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and reaffirms the United States' strong support for our partner.

□ 1000

Time is of the essence. This very morning Hamas continues to fire rockets into Israel despite the United Nations cease-fire resolution passed last night. Israel has a right and Israel has a duty to defend her people against the attacks of a terrorist group that victimizes the people of Gaza and Israelis on her borders. In the face of those evil acts no nation could tolerate, I commend Israel for working to minimize civilian casualties.

But in these dire circumstances, America must stand with Israel. We must show the resolve of our relationship as peaceful democracies, and we must show the resolve of a relationship borne of the intimate and deepest held values of both of our people, for the history of Israel is a history of struggle.

Over 60 years ago, the State of Israel, under the leadership of a small band of courageous Zionists, declared independence in its ancient homeland. It was promptly recognized by the United States, and it was promptly attacked by its Arab neighbors. The more things change, the more they seem to stay the same.

Israel prevailed against the long odds then, again in 1967 and in 1973 and countless other times, and Israel will prevail again today; but she will not do so alone.

We and all the freedom-loving nations of the world must stand with Israel and condemn the violence that's been perpetrated against her people. We cannot stand idly by while a gathering menace grows in the region and a

menace perpetrates such acts of evil against our cherished allies.

We must come together to rededicate ourselves to the preservation and protection of Israel as a Jewish state and of Jerusalem as her eternal capital, and I commend all of my colleagues for bringing this timely resolution to the floor.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, for a unanimous consent request, I yield to the gentleman from Rhode Island (Mr. KENNEDY).

(Mr. KENNEDY asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Israel's right to defend its citizens from the terrorism and extremism of Hamas.

Our government has a responsibility to stand in solidarity with Israel as it endures a difficult moment in its history.

Imagine if an American town or city was hit by a barrage of rocket and mortar attacks? How would we respond? How would we react?

Just as America would not tolerate violence against its people, Israel should not have stand idly by and watch while rockets rain down on its citizens.

Israel has correctly taken steps that will ensure that terrorism against its nation will be punished with the hope that one day its nation can live in peace.

Fifteen Israelis have lost their lives since the beginning of Hamas's rocket and mortar attacks in late December.

While I deplore the cowardly attacks from Hamas against the Israeli people, I am aware of the suffering of Palestinian people living in the Gaza Strip.

Since the conflict began, hundreds of Palestinians civilians have lost their lives.

But make no mistake about it, this conflict was created by Hamas's unwavering commitment to violence against both Israelis and Palestinians.

Since coming to power in 2006, Hamas has done nothing but terrorize Israelis and intimidate the Palestinian people with its iron-fist militancy.

This terrorist organization openly recruits suicide bombers to launch attacks in Israel but in Arab nations as well.

Just last week, a female suicide bomber killed over 100 innocent Iraqi Muslims without causing the slightest outcry from Hamas.

In Gaza, where Hamas has ruled for several years, Palestinians are without decent schools, affordable healthcare and any semblance of a bright economic future.

This is because Hamas's mission is not to lift up Palestinians, it is to inflame passions and stir hatred against the State of Israel.

Hamas represents a great threat to international peace and to the stability of Israel and will continue to do so as long as it remains a significant force in the Middle East.

For too long Hamas has terrorized both Israelis and Palestinians alike. It falsely believes that it can use terrorism and intimidation to bully Israelis to the bargaining table.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from West Virginia (Mr. RAHALL).

Mr. RAHALL. I thank the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Af-

fairs Committee for yielding me the time and certainly respect his work on this resolution. We have talked about this issue numerous times over our careers in this body.

Madam Speaker, I am saddened by the recent escalation and fighting over the past few weeks in the Middle East. I condemn the Hamas attacks and recent air strikes in southern Lebanon into Israel. My hope is that all sides can take a step back, deescalate the fighting, and work together to renew the cease-fire agreement that expired on December 19. At the same time, humanitarian aid and assistance should be allowed to reach those in the region that need it the most, particularly civilian victims of the conflict.

Military action alone is not going to be a solution to the problems in the Middle East; we all know that. Working towards a lasting, peaceful solution to these conflicts by addressing the root causes is in the best interests of the United States.

The current fighting is not in the best interests of the United States. Only the extremists on both sides are the winners. Those moderates in the middle, both in Israel and on the Palestinian side, are the real losers in the current fighting.

Make no mistake about it. This campaign was planned some time ago, not just at the expiration of the cease-fire in December. Recent events in Israel show that the prime minister election coming up in February certainly have been a major factor in these air strikes, witnessing meteoric rise of Defense Minister Ehud Barak from almost nothing in the polls to now leading for prime minister of Israel.

So make no mistake about it, there are a variety of factors on all sides that come into play. There's no political will on the Palestinian side. There's no political side on the Israeli side to reach a real agreement in addressing the root causes.

This resolution, while there's nothing in that it can be denied, is not in my opinion in the best interests of resolving this conflict. We applaud what happened in the United Nations last night, but we know that what happens in the United Nations is far different than what happens on the ground in the region.

We urge the Egyptians, along with the Palestinian Authority, to reach an agreement in Cairo, as they are negotiating as we speak between Israel and Hamas, so that we can start addressing the smuggling of arms and the root causes of the conflict in the region.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 4 minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. KUCINICH).

Mr. KUCINICH. I thank the gentleman.

I support Israel's security and its right to exist in peace, without the fear of rocket attacks from Hamas. And I abhor the violence which has been visited upon the people of Israel who are subject to such attacks. However, I

would submit that the resolution, which this Congress will vote on, is incomplete, that it doesn't sufficiently take notice of the Arms Exports Control Act, which the United States is governed by in terms of its transmittal of arms to Israel, nor does it take notice of the humanitarian conditions sufficiently, nor establish a true path towards peace. And for that reason, I will oppose this resolution.

Israel is an established democracy and a firm U.S. ally. It's also signed agreements governing the use of U.S. military assistance. The Arms Export Control Act of 1976, which governs shipments of weapons from United States to foreign nations, requires that each Nation receiving a shipment of arms from the United States must certify that the weapons are used solely, solely for defensive purposes, not increase the escalation of conflict, nor prejudice the development of peace agreements. And I think in each case, the Israeli use of arms given by the U.S. has failed that test.

Israel has had Gaza under a punishing blockade. A blockade is in itself an act of war, at which time Israel has had complete control of access to Gaza. The Israeli government even made a truce with Hamas in bad faith, because at the same time it was making the truce, it was preparing to attack Gaza, to pursue its policy of regime change, an all-out attack on Hamas to oust Hamas, without any regard to the law and to the consequences to the civilian population of Gaza.

The people of Gaza have no army, no navy, no air force. Israel using F-16 jets and Apache helicopters acquired from the United States is engaged in a military offensive inside Gaza, escalating the conflict in Gaza, and prejudicing the development of peace agreements, contrary to the letter of the stated policies and purposes of U.S. military assistance to Israel.

Now, we know from news reports that the United Nations gave the Israeli Army the coordinates of U.N. schools and that schools have been hit by Israeli tank fire, killing dozens. The U.N. put flags on emergency vehicles and coordinated the movements with the Israeli military, and those vehicles came under attack, killing at least one emergency worker.

The Israeli Army evacuated 100 Palestinians to a house, and then bombed the house, killing 30 people. They don't have bomb shelters in Gaza. Emergency workers have been blocked by the Israeli Army from reaching hundreds of injured persons. Today's Washington Post headline documents that.

We all want peace, but we're not going to get peace until we recognize that there are two parties to this dispute and that we have to also review Israel's conduct as well. That path to peace has to begin with stopping the war, having a cease-fire, constructing a truce, ending the blockade, getting humanitarian assistance through to all the people, rebuilding the infrastructure of the Palestinians, rebuilding

their economic possibilities, bringing Hamas and Israel together for talks, using that as the basis to the path for peace in the Middle East.

This resolution is, therefore, incomplete and I will oppose it, but I urge this Congress to take these concerns up again next week so that we can address the humanitarian issue and, by doing so, open up the possibility of this Congress playing a more constructive role in helping to achieve peace in the region by reaching out to all the parties, notwithstanding the devastating conflict that has been visited on both sides.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 30 seconds to the gentleman from Colorado (Mr. LAMBORN).

Mr. LAMBORN. Madam Speaker, Israel has a responsibility to protect its citizens. Hamas has blatantly ignored any cease-fire agreements by assaulting Israel with thousands of rocket and mortar attacks during the last 8 years, nearly half during this last year, including the 6-month so-called ceasefire.

Israel has the right to defend its people from terrorist attacks and is only taking the actions currently taken in direct response to Hamas policy.

Madam Speaker, I support this resolution, H. Res. 34, and I urge its adoption.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I'm pleased to yield 1 minute to the chairman of the subcommittee that covers the jurisdiction of terrorism and arms and human rights, the gentleman from California (Mr. SHERMAN).

Mr. SHERMAN. Hamas claims to be beleaguered, but it has rejected the U.N. Security Council cease-fire resolution passed last night. Hamas has done everything it can to increase civilian casualties, including the use of human shields. Yet even U.N. estimates say that over two-thirds of the Palestinian casualties have been gun-toting militants, and, other estimates put that number at over three-quarters.

When Hamas launches rockets from a neighborhood, an Israeli sergeant has seconds to decide whether to return fire, and there's always a pundit to vilify that decision. But moral culpability for civilian casualties does not lie at the feet of sergeants. Moral culpability for the horrors of war lies with politicians who seek extreme and unjust ends, through violent means.

While Israel seeks to live in peace alongside a Palestinian state, Hamas seeks to kill or expel every Jew from the Middle East. Hamas proudly waves the banner of genocide and ethnic cleansing.

Vote for the Resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from California (Mr. ROHRABACHER), a senior member of the Foreign Affairs Committee.

Mr. ROHRABACHER. I rise in support of this motion, and let us note that those of us who are seriously sad-

dened by the bloodshed and the carnage that is going on and the loss of innocent lives in Gaza, people being killed and bodies of children being torn apart, we see this horror story. But let us note and we don't have to be reminded that, yes, this is a fight and Israeli planes are dropping those bombs. But if we are serious about ending this tragedy, we must be brutally honest and not give in to ignoring the hard truths which our allies overseas seem to be doing.

In this case, the hard truth is the real blame for this carnage is not Israel. It can be traced back to Hamas, to radical Islamists and those who supplied them their rockets and their weapons. The radical Islamists who ruthlessly and without remorse did what they knew would bring retaliation and slaughter on their own people, they are the ones to blame. The hatred in their hearts, the hatred of Israel, the irreconcilable hatred of those people obviously outweighs the commitment to the safety of their own women and children in Gaza. They are the ones who are to blame for the carnage that is going on right now, and we should not hesitate to condemn that if we really want to bring a peace in the Middle East.

Yes, bloodshed is horrible, and yes, we must also recognize that Israel is doing no more in this case than what any sovereign nation would do if they were attacked. By protecting its own people from attack, this retaliation which has caused this loss of life in Gaza, we must recognize the real villains in this story are not the Israelis. The Israelis are open to peace. The real villains are those people who have ignored the opportunities for peace and, instead, shoot rockets into Israel, knowing there will be retaliation.

Today we are saddened by the loss of innocent lives in Gaza; people being killed and wounded, bodies of children torn apart, all of this is a horror story. If we are serious about ending this tragedy we must be brutally honest, and not give in to ignoring hard truths. In this case the hard truth is that the real blame for this carnage in Gaza is traced to actions taken by Hamas, radical Islamists, and those who supply them with rockets and other weapons.

There was a tremendous opportunity for peace when Israel withdrew its troops from Gaza in 2005. Instead of moving forward and building a Palestinian homeland, irreconcilables have launched nearly 7,000 rockets and mortar rounds into Israel since Israeli troops left.

The hate-filled radicals who launched missiles into Israel—Hamas triggermen, not Israeli pilots—are the ones who are really responsible for the horrible mayhem we are witnessing in Gaza.

The radical Islamists ruthlessly and without any remorse did what they knew would bring retaliation and result in the slaughter of their own people. The hatred of Israel in the hearts of these Hamas radicals clearly outweighs their commitment to the safety and well being of their own people. That's a hard fact. And that after shooting rockets into Israel, they

hide among and behind non-combatants—women, and children—makes their actions even more despicable.

An honest assessment leads to the conclusion that Hamas doesn't want peace with Israel and has no desire for a two state solution. Hamas wants a war that will destroy Israel. This commitment is the real cause of the current bloodshed in Gaza. Once Israel left Gaza, Hamas should have used its resources, their money, our money, on health care, education, roads and economic development in Gaza. Instead they have chosen death and destruction.

Recently China's representative to the U.N. Security Council voiced concern about, "large-scale Israeli air attacks against Gaza." Now, that takes chutzpah! According to a January 1st report in the Jerusalem Post, many of the rockets fired into Israel "were manufactured in China. These Chinese rockets were smuggled into Gaza after the Sinai border wall was blown up by Hamas in January." Making matters worse the State Department and the White House hasn't mentioned a word about the China connection to the turmoil in Gaza, just as they're mum about Chinese complicity in crimes elsewhere.

Yes, the bloodshed is horrible, and yes, Israel is doing what any other sovereign nation would do. It is protecting its people by retaliation when attacked. Those who shoot rockets into Israel know there will be retaliation, thus they are the responsible party for the bloodshed we are now witnessing. It's the hard truth we can't ignore if we are to someday end this terrible heart-wrenching violence.

Humanitarians do the cause of peace no favor by blaming Israel for retaliating, instead of fixing responsibility on those who initiated the violence by attacking Israel.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, at this time, I would like to ask unanimous consent that there be an additional 6 minutes of debate on the resolution under consideration and that it be equally divided between both sides.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER). Is there objection to the request of the gentleman from California?

There was no objection.

□ 1015

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, could I inquire about the time remaining on each side?

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 7½ minutes and the gentlewoman from Florida has 3 minutes.

Mr. BERMAN. Thank you, Madam Speaker.

I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from New York, the chairman of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, Mr. ENGEL.

Mr. ENGEL. I thank the gentleman.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of the resolution. I support the right of democratic Israel to defend itself against terrorism by Hamas.

We know that missiles have been raining down on Israel, more than 7,000 in the past few years, and that the Palestinians, Hamas, are using its people as human shields. We say to Hamas you will not be allowed to use terrorism as a negotiating tool. The hypocrisy of the negotiating community

and the U.N. and demonstrators around the world, we say to those people, you will not hold Israel to a different standard than any other country when it comes to protecting the safety of its citizens.

To those who say that Israel is using disproportionate force, is it disproportionate to want to protect your citizens from terrorist attacks? We want to see two states, a Palestinian state and an Israeli state, living side by side, a Jewish-Israeli state, an Arab-Palestinian state. We want to see that, Hamas does not, Israel does.

There are three things that Hamas needs to do before it is a player in the international community. It needs to recognize the right of Israel to exist. It needs to abide by previous agreements signed by the Palestinians, and it needs to reject terrorism as a negotiating tool.

There is strong and bipartisan support in this Congress for the democratic State of Israel, and we stand by Israel when it has tried to defend its citizens from being attacked by terrorism. That is why we have bipartisan support, and that is why the United States will always stand with the democratic nation of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I would like to yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I would like to make five simple points that get to the heart of what is happening right now.

First, Israel is a democratic Jewish state that respects human rights and desires peace with its neighbors, innocent civilians, innocent Palestinians included. The jihadists in Gaza continue to terrify thousands of innocent Israelis with their attack, while Israel continues to facilitate the transfer of humanitarian aid into Gaza.

Second, Hamas is a hate filled, violent, Islamic militant group that is backed by Iran and Syria regimes and seeks Israel's destruction.

Third, like any sovereign nation, Israel has the right to defend herself, her existence and to protect her citizens from attack, whether by Hamas or Hezbollah or other radical Islamists.

I have been to Sderot, and I have watched as air raid warnings forced the entire population, including children, to hide from an incoming attack.

Fourth, the actions and aims of violent Islamist extremists and their state sponsors is not just a threat to the Middle East peace and security, but to global peace and security. Today it's Hamas, tomorrow Hezbollah, the Taliban, al Qaeda, and so on.

Fifth, the U.S. and Israel are in this together. We have a saying in Spanish about close alliances that describes the U.S. and Israel friendship perfectly, we are two wings of one bird.

We depend on each other for our security and our existence. America and Israel are engaged in a broader conflict throughout the world, a struggle between liberty and tyranny, between

those who love life and those who preach death. We did not seek this struggle, but we must win it.

As we stand at this important day in our living history, let us remember the consequences of inaction in the face of evil. For many years, responsible nations turned the other way, refused to accept the reality of what Israel was subjected to.

But no responsible nation could stand by and allow such attacks to continue, allow thousands and hundreds of its people to continue to live in constant fear of being murdered at any moment. No responsible nation could defer its security of its people to entrenched bureaucrats, the European Union, the United Nations, who constantly chastise Israel for taking all necessary actions to protect her own people.

Despite the U.N.'s rhetoric, there is no moral or legal equivalent between militant Islamic extremists who target civilians and a democracy that responds by targeting them. This false moral equivalence only persuades militants to persist in the unlawful action against civilians.

So, Madam Speaker, I hope that the House will carefully consider this resolution, will look at the actual language of the United Nations' resolution that points no finger at Hamas and its violent action and only points its finger at the democratic State of Israel. It's an unbalanced resolution. The United States was correct in not voting in favor of it.

Israel must not abide by it. We all want peace, but Israel wants peace with security as well.

With that, Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of our time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, for the purpose of making a unanimous consent request, I am pleased to yield to the chairman of the Energy and Commerce Committee, Mr. WAXMAN.

(Mr. WAXMAN asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WAXMAN. Madam Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 34, a resolution that expresses solidarity with Israel in its efforts to defend itself from Hamas. The resolution also calls on the President to work for a durable and sustainable ceasefire, stresses the need to address the humanitarian situation in Gaza and emphasizes the importance of protecting innocent civilians to the maximum extent possible.

The Hamas leadership has held the Palestinian people hostage to its terrorist aspirations. Peace negotiations have been stalled by its bloody coup against Fatah and Gaza is now in shambles because of its relentless rocket fire against Israel. If Israel is unable to stop Hamas from rearming again, hope will continue to fade for achieving an enduring two state solution with a democratic Jewish Israeli state living beside a viable, independent and democratic Palestinian state.

In the summer of 2005 Israel disengaged from Gaza entirely, unilaterally removing settlements and military installations at a great fi-

nancial and political cost. One year later Israel went to war with Hezbollah, despite the Israeli Army's complete disengagement from Southern Lebanon six years earlier.

The Israeli people face a grim reality that Hamas and Hezbollah seek their destruction despite Israel's overtures of peace and tranquility. Although that does not mean Israel will not continue to take risks for peace, it is imperative that Israel and the United States continue to take all measures necessary to fight these terrorists and safeguard Israel's security.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from Nevada (Ms. BERKLEY).

Ms. BERKLEY. I thank the gentleman from California for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support for this resolution and for Israel's right to defend itself. No nation could be expected to stand idly by as its citizens are bombarded by missiles launched 20, 30, 40 times a day by a terrorist organization on its orders.

These daily attacks have caused death and inflicted enormous physical and emotional damage on the people of Israel. Their government, the Israeli government, has shown extraordinary restraint in not retaliating until now.

For those of my colleagues who expressed concern or outrage for Israel's actions, where was their concern and outrage when Israeli children were killed by indiscriminate Hamas rockets? Where is their outrage when Israel asked Egypt to close the tunnels to stem the flow of weapons coming from Egypt to the Gaza? Where is their outrage then?

Hamas is all too happy to fire their missiles from schools and mosques and houses, putting their own families at risk in order to maximize civilian casualties. Their own leaders cynically embrace a culture of death, not only for Israel, but their own people.

I urge support for this resolution. We should be standing by the only democracy in the Middle East, Israel.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentlelady from California, Mrs. SUSAN DAVIS.

Mrs. DAVIS of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of Israel's right to self-defense and a broader U.S. diplomatic role in the Middle East. The Israeli government has a right and a responsibility to defend Israeli citizens, and we have an obligation to support our ally in times of crisis.

But this body also has an obligation to advance the dialogue beyond the conflict of today toward how we can achieve a stable peace in the future. This conflict shows that the United States cannot manage the situation from the sidelines.

This approach only serves Iran and radical elements in the region. Rather, we must maintain a high diplomatic presence that allows responsible parties to capture every opportunity for peace.

I believe that the new administration and the new Congress represent an opportunity to regain our position as an

honest broker in the region. For this to happen, the tone coming from Washington must be in sharp contrast to the last 8 years.

Congress helped set that tone, which is where I hope my colleagues will use this tragedy as an opportunity to call for an end to this conflict and a broader, American, diplomatic presence in the region.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to a member of the committee, the gentlelady from Texas, Ms. SHEILA JACKSON-LEE.

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. I thank the distinguished chairman.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support H. Res. 34. War is ugly. That is why it took more than 6,000 or so rockets before Israel decided to defend herself. There is no doubt that we, as Members of Congress, wrap ourselves around the need for humanitarian aid and relief. We too feel the pain of loss of life.

But I think it is important to understand the resolution. It gives a wonderful roadmap for the decision of peace, a two-state solution, Israel and Palestine.

But what it does say, and what all of us have to commit ourselves to, is that no nation can stand for the extinguishing of other people in another sovereign nation. All Hamas has to do is to stand for the dignity and integrity of the Palestinian people, to allow Israel to survive and stand, to commit to its existence and to promote the survival of its people.

We must rally around people, women and children and families. But we cannot engage in peace unless all stand down.

This resolution is a roadmap for that. It is to encourage Egypt to continue in the peace process. It is to close the tunnels. It is to make sure that we are supporting the dignity of all.

I support this resolution. I beg the people of Palestine to stand up for dignity, peace, democracy and freedom for all.

Madam Speaker, thank you for your leadership in bringing this timely resolution to the floor today. I want to also thank the minority leader, Congressman BOEHNER for working with us in a bipartisan manner on this important issue.

Let me start off by saying that I support House Resolution 34—recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

I support this bipartisan resolution because I believe that we must support a country's right to defend itself against terror attacks. I believe that we must not show support for Hamas, when it launches rockets indiscriminately, at civilians or when it incorporates elements of terrorists infrastructure into civilian population centers.

This resolution promotes a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, which would not allow a reestablishment of the status quo ante where Hamas can continue to launch rockets out of Gaza. Moreover, a durable and lasting cease-fire would ensure that innocent Pal-

estinians especially women and children are protected and humanitarian assistance is allowed to flow freely.

We all want to see peace take place in this region. While diplomatic means should always be sought first, there comes a time when a nation must defend itself. Sadly, this defense often comes with many innocent civilian casualties for which we all extend our deepest condolences.

I encourage our friends in Israel to take greater steps to protect the innocent Palestinians living in and along the Gaza strip and allow more humanitarian goods and services to enter the area to help the people of Gaza, especially elderly, women, and children. These are the victims on both sides of this conflict.

John F. Kennedy said years ago that “those who make peaceful revolution impossible will make violent revolution inevitable.” As the rockets have continued to be fired into Israel, we have seen Hamas refuse to comply with the urgings of the United States, the European Union, Russia, and even the United Nations requests for a cease-fire. I urge Hamas to reconsider for the sake of the Palestinian people.

Although, violence begets violence and yet even in our great Nation we provide for defense of self. I do not support violence, however we would not expect a child to continue to be bullied, to continue to be beat up, to continue to have violence inflicted upon him without understanding when that child decides to fight back.

As missiles have been fired into their homes, shops, and restaurants the people of Israel have finally decided to respond.

I support the people of Israel and their right to be free from violence, free from terror, and free watching their friends and families die. I also support the innocent Palestinians right to be free from violence and have access to humanitarian relief. I am sad that the innocent Palestinians' have to suffer for the violent acts of Hamas. Along with many of my colleagues, I continue to call for a cease-fire and an opportunity for diplomatic negotiations to succeed that would include a two state solution of Palestine and Israel.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Minnesota (Mr. ELLISON).

Mr. ELLISON. Madam Speaker, I come to the floor today torn about this resolution. Though I welcome resolutions by the Congress to express support for the people of Israel and Gaza at this difficult time, this resolution does not do enough to move towards a stable and durable peace in the Middle East.

I feel that I cannot vote against the resolution, because I believe every country has a right to defend itself. I have been to Sderot, and I have seen firsthand both the physical and emotional destruction caused by the rockets.

Last fall I voted for a resolution specifically condemning the rocket attacks into Israel. However, I feel I cannot vote for this resolution either, because it does not sufficiently address the human suffering by Palestinians in Gaza. Over 750 people have been killed, 250 of them children, 50 of them women, with over 3,000 people injured.

Mosques have been bombed, schools as well. Even before the recent military operation, life for the people in Gaza has become increasingly unlivable under a crushing blockade. The Red Cross has been obstructed, 800,000 people without water, 1 million people without electricity.

That is why I intend to vote “present” today. Hopefully we can urge this Congress to not simply declare its support of its ally, but will actually move its ally and the rest of the region toward a more durable, sustainable, final solution to this conflict.

History has shown that ground troops and air strikes have not resolved conflict in the Middle East. If we try to resolve conflict with military might and nothing else, then we will be no safer than we were before. No one will be. Diplomacy is necessary to save lives and yield a lasting peace with security.

The United States must play a more active role in pursuing real peace in the Middle East.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, to close the debate, I am pleased to yield to the chairman of the Middle East and South Asia Subcommittee of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN).

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 2½ minutes.

Mr. ACKERMAN. I thank the chairman.

Madam Speaker, my colleagues, I spent Sunday in Sderot with Mayor Bloomberg of New York. We were being briefed by some people on the Israeli side of the border with Gaza when suddenly, after 14 missiles had already fallen that morning before we got there, the sirens started screaming, and we were rushed and told we had 20 seconds to get into a fallout shelter before the missile hit, rather petrifying.

I cannot imagine what I would have done had I children out on the street, as happens each and every day, sometimes hourly in that little town, trying to live peacefully across the border from its neighbor.

□ 1030

I listened very, very carefully to our colleagues, especially to the gentleman from Ohio, who has run twice on our side for the Presidency of the United States, and the gentleman from Texas, who ran twice for the Presidency of the United States on the other side of the aisle, and I was wondering, had they become President, either of them, and God forbid our country was struck by missiles, and they had taken the oath to defend our country, how many missiles would have had to have fallen before we struck back?

Countries have rights to defend themselves. It is not just one missile or two missiles or three missiles. From the beginning of this decade, each year over 1,000 missiles have been launched from Gaza on Israel. Thousands of missiles. And yet they have held their

strength, they have held their warnings that they issued, with the patience of Job. A country that was founded to protect the lives of Jews from destruction and annihilation after World War II held its calm, held itself together, until the missiles started falling 50 a day, 80 a day, 100 a day. And they warned the Palestinians that they would strike back, and they have, as is their right, as is their responsibility to their citizens.

We are all upset at the loss of innocent lives in this altercation and any altercation. But, you know, it reminds me of my two boys when they were growing up and they would get in a little hassle with each other, and I would separate them and say, Who started this? And Ari would say, Corey hit me back first.

If you don't want to be hit back, don't hit. That is the message. Israel has the right to defend itself, and we stand with Israel as it exercises that right to live in peace with its neighbors.

Mr. McMAHON. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 34, this bipartisan legislation sponsored by our Congressional leadership and to stand with Israel and its efforts to protect innocent Israeli civilians against attacks by Hamas.

No country would permit attacks against innocent people, regardless of the political agenda or concerns that motivate such actions, and we in the international community cannot do so here.

We all know Israel as a country of peace, and the only way Israel and its neighbors will be able to enjoy a true and lasting peace will be through the agreed upon process working toward a two-state solution. We cannot let a group of terrorist extremists derail the hard work that our President, Israel, and leaders throughout the region have worked so hard to achieve.

In their oath of loyalty, members of Hamas declare that "death in the cause of God is their supreme desire." And since Hamas unilaterally decided to breach its agreed upon truce and renew its attacks on Israel on December 24, we have seen the horrors that occur when this extreme ideology is put into effect against innocent people—both Israeli and Palestinian alike.

Residents of Israeli communities near Gaza have endured over 6,000 rockets crossing into their borders, threatening their lives, and breaching a 6-month cease-fire.

Hamas continues to concentrate its bases of operations close to Palestinian residential neighborhoods and humanitarian centers—sometimes even firing rockets from rooftops of school buildings.

And while there are some who say that Hamas is merely a problem just for Israel, Hamas' utter disregard of innocent human life ultimately affects us all here in the United States, and all peace-loving people around the world.

In the face of increasing international terror, we in the United States must condemn the actions of Hamas. Hamas refuses to employ peaceful methods in dealing with Israel and refuses to acknowledge its right to exist.

The unyielding disregard for human life that Hamas displays is not only a terrorist strategy

against Israel, but an ideology that Hamas strives to spread to others in that region and to the global community as a whole.

Israel has an absolute right to defend its citizens and borders. I therefore urge my colleagues to support House H. Res. 34, stand by our friend and ally Israel, and condemn Hamas for obstructing the basic human rights of both groups and the road to a peaceful co-existence between Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. CAPUANO. Madam Speaker, I voted in favor of H. Res. 34, Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, because not to support that right would undermine Israel's rights as a sovereign state. That said, I continue to deplore the eagerness of this House to assign blame in a tragic and complicated historic conflict. It is true that Hamas began to fire rockets into Israel just days after the expiration of the 6-month cease-fire agreement. This properly elicited a reaction from Israel aimed at protecting its citizens. It is regrettable, however, that Israel was unable—in the 3 years after its unilateral withdrawal from Gaza—to work to strengthen those Palestinians who seek peace. I hope that a cease-fire observed by all parties, credibly verified and effectively monitored, will be followed by vigorous diplomacy. When calm is established, I urge the Government of Israel to engage in confidence-building measures to increase the likelihood of a negotiated settlement.

I urge my colleagues in the House to address the human tragedy in Gaza and southern Israel rather than to choose sides among suffering people. We must not forget that there are innocent Palestinian civilians suffering along with Israeli civilians. We would do well to acknowledge the plight of those on both sides of Gaza's border and the need to address the humanitarian crisis in a manner that allows free access to the necessary staff, supplies, and resources.

Mr. HOLT. Madam Speaker, I am voting for H. Res. 34, which expresses vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare and security of the State of Israel. The indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas are an unacceptable assault on Israel's citizens and her sovereignty. Like all nations in the world, Israel has the right and responsibility to respond in self-defense. The United States has a responsibility to stand with Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East, during this crisis.

At the same time, the United States has a responsibility to ensure that the humanitarian needs in Gaza are being addressed promptly and responsibly. The present resolution, H. Res. 34, is not so clear on that. The United States should have done more to ensure that they were being met even before the recent fighting, just as the United States should have done more to stop the mortars and rockets fired from Gaza over recent years. I am troubled deeply by reports that the humanitarian situation, bad as it has been, continues to deteriorate. Israel must make every effort to protect the innocent and prevent the destruction of civilian communities. All parties must work as quickly as possible to enact a durable and sustainable cease-fire that will allow for a lasting improvement of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and for the long-term security of Israel.

It is critical to recognize that even a durable and sustainable cease-fire is only a temporary solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian con-

flict. We should remember that extremism incubates in societies afflicted with poverty, hopelessness, and humiliation. We must work tirelessly to diminish the appeal and influence of terrorists by lifting up all of those trapped in these conditions. It is equally necessary that we continue to assist moderate Palestinians and strengthen governments that are committed to securing a lasting peace with the State of Israel.

I continue to believe that the United States has a vital role to play in brokering an enduring peace agreement. My thoughts and prayers are with all the innocent civilians suffering in Israel and Gaza. For their sake, the United States must recommit itself to bringing Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. This includes the need to create a viable representative of the Palestinians that can negotiate in good faith. And it includes the need to get the Israelis to make the daily welfare of ordinary Palestinians one of the principal criteria for any negotiations. The future security of the Middle East depends on negotiating a just, permanent, and peaceful settlement between Israelis and Palestinians that both guarantees Israel's security and establishes a Palestinian state.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of H. Res. 34, legislation that not only recognizes Israel's legitimate right to defend itself from terrorist threats, but also expresses this body's steadfast commitment to a strong, vibrant, and long-lasting relationship between the United States and Israel, the only functioning democracy in the Middle East. While rockets, mortars, and homemade weapons continue to rain down on Israel from Lebanon and inside Palestinian controlled territory in Gaza, this resolution places the world on notice that the U.S. House will not waver during Israel's hour of need.

The violence and terror inflicted on the people of Israel by agents of Hamas and their sympathizers represents a continuation of the organization's blood-stained history, and is little more than an extension of a decades-long campaign designed to destroy the State of Israel. It is a moral imperative to stand alongside the people of Israel while their government repels and quells the violence inflicted by Hamas, and today's consideration of H. Res. 34 provides much needed leadership that the international community would be wise to follow.

Make no mistake: the violence, death, and destruction suffered by both the innocent citizens in Israel and the Palestinian people is a tragedy that no man, woman, or child should be forced to endure. Yet this tragedy suffocating the innocents on both sides is not born of a decision taken by the Israeli government, it is singularly the result of a long-planned paramilitary campaign of terror initiated by a terrorist organization.

Madam Speaker, I rise not only to support this timely resolution, but also to join the chorus of voices in this chamber calling for the terrorists in Gaza to put an end to their campaign. Let the violence stop, and the healing process begin. Only then can the diplomatic process have a chance to work towards the international community's goal of a democratic, free, and vibrant State of Israel living side-by-side a peaceful and stable Palestinian community.

Mrs. SCHMIDT. Madam Speaker, I rise today to applaud this House for standing with our friend, the nation of Israel.

Madam Speaker, Israel has a right and a duty to defend herself from the savage attacks of Hamas launched from Gaza.

The Israeli government continues to work for peace, but the relentless attacks have left her with little choice but to use military force to stop the Hamas militants hiding among innocent civilians in Gaza.

Madam Speaker, Hamas must end its attacks on the people of Israel for peace to take root; I applaud this House for its strong support of our friend Israel.

Mr. HONDA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my comments on H. Res. 34, a resolution which reaffirms our commitment to Israel and its right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and Hamas.

I have always been a strong supporter of Israel, and consider myself a good friend to Israel. Israel's right to exist as a country is unquestionable in my mind, and I support its right to defend itself from those who would do harm to its people.

I also strongly support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, and support a resolution to the conflict through diplomacy and negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. I have consistently supported efforts to increase peacemaking efforts in the region, including asking the President to appoint a special envoy to the Middle East.

For these important reasons, I voted in favor of H. Res. 34. This resolution rightly reiterates our support for the safety, security, and welfare of Israel. However, Madam Speaker, H. Res. 34 is not perfect, and my vote for it today is not unequivocal. The resolution does not adequately address the civilian casualties in Gaza, or the worsening humanitarian situation there. The world has a responsibility to join together to help solve this crisis. I also hope that the incoming Administration will turn this hope into reality.

The human consequence of this violence has taken a tragic toll on Gaza civilians, where access to basic humanitarian needs is limited, and dangerous. Some reports by the International Committee of the Red Cross describe the movement of ambulances and aid workers as extremely difficult, and attribute that difficulty to Israel's restrictions. In addition to this challenge, existing hospitals are running out of fuel, power, and supplies to treat victims.

We are right to support Israel's right to defend itself, but we must not forget that innocent Gaza civilians are living under harsh, even desperate, conditions right now. Both the Israeli and Palestinian people deserve to live a life free of the threat of attack or psychological fear. It has always been my hope that our involvement in the region may be used to improve the lives of the people affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Once again, Madam Speaker, my vote in favor of H. Res. 34 reflects my strong support for Israel, but the severe humanitarian plight of Gaza civilians is something we must not ignore.

Mr. BLUMENAUER. Madam Speaker, I appreciate the widespread concern for the crisis unfolding in Gaza since December 27. The recent conflict in between Palestinians and Israelis is as tragic as it was predictable. The fundamental lesson in the Middle East is clear: without political processes that strive continuously for peace, events and the acts of extremists can overpower the desire of people across the region to reject violence.

I voted "present" because words matter and this resolution did not express adequately the scope of the humanitarian crisis. To that end I am joining other colleagues in urging the administration to work to meet the immediate humanitarian needs while we work for a ceasefire.

Any country facing such attacks would wish to respond firmly and decisively, yet it is frustrating to witness the region locked into a downward spiral of conflict. This path will give neither side what it wants, but will continue to destabilize the situation and further impede efforts at a resolution.

This cycle of violence must be broken. Yet, nearly a decade of failed Bush policies has left America in a weakened position at the table, less able to help deliver peace or improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. At least the administration declined to vote against a January 8 United Nations Security Council resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza.

Forceful U.S. diplomatic reengagement now is critical. Though a secure Israel and an independent Palestinian state living side by side seems remote today, I have high hopes that the new Obama administration will exhibit a strong reversal of course and reengage the region. Our efforts here today are inadequate to this task. We must not only work for a ceasefire that halts this backslide into chaos, but move forward toward an ultimate solution that recognizes the legitimate needs of both Israelis and Palestinians. We know where we need to go, we must have the will to achieve it.

Mr. LARSON of Connecticut. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 34, a resolution that recognizes Israel's right to defend itself from attacks by Hamas and reaffirms the United States's support of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. I was extremely pleased to join with Speaker PELOSI, Republican Leader BOEHNER, and other bipartisan leaders of the House in introducing this important legislation.

Israel withdrew from the Gaza Strip in 2005 in hopes of reducing violence between Israelis and Palestinians. Unfortunately, just the opposite has occurred. Since Israel's withdrawal, Hamas have terrorized Israel by firing more than 6,000 missiles from Gaza into Israel's southern region. Israel, thankfully, has shown a remarkable level of restraint throughout these attacks. It was not until December 2008, when Hamas brazenly refused to continue a ceasefire, instead choosing to ratchet up its attacks, that Israel used military force in response.

The resolution before us today emphasizes the United States's belief that Israel has the right to self-defense. No other country in the world would or could have shown the level of restraint that Israel has over the past years. Moreover, none should ever be required to.

House Resolution 34 also recognizes the burgeoning humanitarian situation in the Gaza Strip. While Israel has provided humanitarian assistance throughout this conflict, the situation will not be fully addressed until a stable and lasting peace can be achieved between the Israelis and Palestinians. For that reason, the resolution states the United States's full support of a ceasefire that ends rocket attacks by Hamas, prevents additional arms and explosives from entering Gaza, and jumpstarts a diplomatic initiative in the region.

Madam Speaker, passage of this resolution will send the right message at the right time to our friends in Israel and our allies around the world. I urge its quick passage.

Mr. BARROW. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 34, supporting Israel and its government's right to defend itself against attacks from Hamas.

The relationship between the United States and Israel is based on a shared commitment to democratic values. Israel has stood on the front lines in confronting those who would use terror against civilians as a means of bringing about political change. During that time, the United States has stood for the political independence and physical security of Israel.

A government's first responsibility is to defend its citizens, and Israel has the same right and obligation to protect her people. If our people were being terrorized daily by a barrage of rocket fire, we would certainly act to defend ourselves, and we would expect no less of our Government.

Those who truly value peace and democracy are united in the belief that the only remedy to this crisis is a successful peace process. Working for peace is not an alternative to security, but is part of security. Without a peace process, and ultimately without peace, Israel remains insecure. That's why I rise in support of H. Res 34, recognizing Israel's right to defend herself, and that's why I voice my continued support for peace negotiations between Israel and Hamas. I hope that we can all look forward to the day when our countries will be able to devote less of our national treasures to the vital work of survival and self defense, and be able, instead, to devote ourselves to more profitable enterprises.

Mr. BACA. Madam Speaker, I rise today to support House Resolution 34, a resolution to recognize Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

Israel continues to be the United States' strongest ally in the Middle East.

Now Israel faces a tough situation with her neighbors.

Since 2005, Israel attempted to promote peace with the Palestinians by withdrawing its civilians and soldiers from Gaza in hopes of lessening day to day conflicts.

However, since then Israel has received over 6,000 attacks from the area of Gaza, including a flurry of attacks last month when Hamas abandoned a 6-month ceasefire.

The Hamas leadership continues to hold Palestinian civilians as hostages to its terrorist agenda and Israelis now find themselves within range of Hamas rockets.

The bloodshed and conflict of this situation will only lead to more devastation if nothing is done.

The United States supports Israel and all efforts to promote a cease-fire and a durable and sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I urge my colleagues to vote in favor of H. Res. 34, and stand for justice and humanity.

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, I am proud to be a cosponsor of this essential Resolution, recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

As Israel faces intense international criticism for exercising its legitimate right to self-defense, southern Israel is being repeatedly and

consistently showered with Hamas rockets and northern Israel has been hit by rockets from Lebanon.

Like all sovereign nations, Israel has not only a right, but moreover, an obligation, to ensure the safety and security of her citizens.

Let me be very clear. Israel's response, her defense of her people, is in reaction to the hundreds of Hamas missiles that were targeted at Israeli citizens throughout the flimsy ceasefire of 2008.

Hamas's leaders, choosing terror against Israel over the welfare of the Palestinian people, have chosen violence over peace.

And while Hamas has been going out of its way to kill innocent Israelis, Israel has been going above and beyond—even putting itself at risk—to protect innocent Palestinians.

Specifically, Israel drops leaflets and makes phone calls to targeted Palestinian areas to warn citizens they are in danger, even if this means losing the element of surprise and putting the lives of its own soldiers at risk.

In contrast, Hamas deliberately attacks Israeli civilians and uses its own people as human shields.

In addition, Israel has been facilitating the transfer of significant amounts of humanitarian supplies to the Gaza Strip; delivering 15,000 tons of aid over the past week and a half.

Hamas, on the other hand, has stolen some of those humanitarian medical supplies from civilians to give to their gunmen.

Undeniably, the suffering is great in Israel and Gaza. Now is the time for us all to stand together in support of Israel and peace. I urge my colleagues to support this critical resolution, and pray that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel, and starts working towards peace instead of terror.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my concerns regarding H. Res. 34. I do not think that this resolution provides a complete picture of the conflict in Gaza and as a result, I will be voting present on this resolution. I am particularly concerned that this resolution does not address the core cause of the crisis, and I am not confident that this resolution will be beneficial to improving the situation in Gaza.

I have grave concerns about Hamas's alarming history of violence. However, in order to resolve this crisis it is imperative that we encourage both Israel and Hamas to pursue a peaceful resolution and come to a sustainable cease-fire.

Today marks the 14th day of the Gaza war. Over 700 people have been killed by both Israeli and Hamas military actions. International aid workers are reporting that they are unable to access the Gaza civilians and the United Nations has suspended its aid operations following the death of a U.N. official. I believe that a bipartisan resolution should have more fully addressed these challenges and stressed the need for both parties to cease all fire and fulfill their obligations under the Road Map peace plans.

This weekend I will be meeting with a number of relevant organizations and community leaders from my district to discuss the current crisis in Gaza. Through these meetings I hope to continue to learn more about the status of the ongoing situation and consider the ways in which the United States can develop a proactive plan that will both end this current conflict and bring long-term peace and stability to the region.

Mr. DINGELL. Madam Speaker, since 2001, thousands of rockets and mortar have been indiscriminately fired into southern Israel at innocent civilians. When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, these rocket attacks continued. In December 2008, the negotiated cease fire ended and Hamas responded by firing over 60 rockets into Israel in a single day. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis are terrorized daily by fear of attack while an extremist group who calls for Israel's destruction continues to operate.

The Israeli government determined it had no choice but to respond to Hamas militarily. Sadly, the cost has been great. Since Israel began its two-week offensive on the Gaza strip, over 750 Palestinians have died. An UN-operated school was bombed and dozens of innocent children were killed. In an unusual move, the International Red Cross issued a statement that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded." Gazans are trapped with little ability to seek shelter or help for the wounded.

Does Israel have a right to defend itself? My answer is unequivocally, yes. I cannot argue with most of the statements contained in this resolution. I do not condone the tactics Hamas uses in its efforts to destroy Israel, nor is it acceptable that an elected government refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and exploits its own citizens to further its extreme agenda. But I cannot also pretend this resolution, H. Res. 34, will help bring about a cease-fire in Gaza, resolve the extreme humanitarian crisis Gazans face, or bring us closer to a final resolution sought by the Quartet, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Middle Eastern nations.

That a peaceful resolution and a two-state solution seem to grow more distant with each passing day is a very real consequence of the Bush Administration's inaction and failure of leadership. Eight years ago, President Bush came to office and pledged to negotiate a "road map to peace." As we can clearly see, the few efforts President Bush made during his tenure have fallen far short.

Last night, the United Nations passed a cease-fire resolution. Today, the crisis continues. In this ongoing battle, words and actions are very different things. That is why President-elect Obama must reengage the peace process immediately upon taking office. He has the support of many of the Middle Eastern nations, who have attempted to fill in as mediators while the Bush Administration was asleep at the wheel and who also have an interest in rallying against the growing threat of Iran. President-elect Obama faces many challenges when he enters office, but with the help of his capable appointed Secretary of State, and my dear friend, Hillary Clinton, I believe the United States can once again take the lead in achieving a peaceful two-state solution for the Israelis and Palestinians.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 34, which reaffirms our Nation's strong unwavering support for Israel and its right to defend itself against missile attacks from Gaza.

As an ardent supporter of Israel and its fight against terrorism, I am well aware of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and am monitoring developments closely.

As any nation, Israel has every right to protect itself from terrorist attacks within its bor-

ders and across its borders to ensure the safety of its citizens from the threat of terrorism. As a sovereign nation, Israel has the right to defend itself just as our Nation and any of our allies would.

Throughout the past year, Hamas has launched an estimated 3,000 rockets into Israel and during that time the range of these rockets has increased striking further and further into Israel. The ultimate goal is peace, security and prosperity for the people of this troubled region, but there can be no peace when terrorists attack the Israeli people.

Israel is carefully targeting the Hamas leadership and its rocket launching capability, but as long as Hamas hides and operates within civilian locations there will be civilian casualties. That is regrettable, but as long as Hamas launches rockets into Israel, there will also be civilian casualties there.

Our Nation will continue to respond to terrorist attacks and threats on our Nation and our people and I would not expect the Israeli government to react any differently to these ongoing threats.

Madam Speaker, Israel remains our staunchest friend and ally in Middle East and we stand together with them as they endure this most recent assault against their freedom and liberty.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I am proud to be an original cosponsor and strong supporter of House Resolution (H. Res.) 34 which expresses the United States House of Representatives strong support for and commitment to Israel and recognizes that Israel has a fundamental right to defend its citizens against violent attacks.

Back in 2005, I spoke to this House to express my profound concern about Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. I feared that Islamic radicals would exploit that opportunity to jump-start the peace process and instead use Gaza as a launching pad for attacks on Israel; undermining the peace process, exacerbating global and regional terrorism and moving the Middle East one step closer to all out war. I am sad to see that circumstances have proven that my concerns were justified.

There can be no negotiations with—and no concession to—terrorists like Hamas; who refuse to even accept Israel's right to exist. If the world wants calm to return to the Middle East it must speak with one voice—as this House is speaking with one voice today—and tell the leaders of Hamas, and their handlers in Tehran—that blame for this bloodshed falls squarely on their shoulders. To end that bloodshed—and to bring humanitarian relief to the people living in Gaza, Hamas must immediately end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure.

Israel and the United States have shared a special bond since the founding of the modern Jewish State in 1948. As a lone State fighting for freedom and democracy in a region dominated by authoritarian and military regimes, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that the United States can fully count on to stand firm against the terrorists and oppressors.

As we continue to fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region by rogue regimes, and work to halt the States who continue to sponsor terrorism, Israel stands as a lone and vital ally. Similarly, Israel stands as an important strategic partner

with regard to our joint efforts to stop the spread of Islamic radicalism.

We all support the cause of peace; we all want to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolved but will we ever reach that goal if the rockets and mortars do not stop; that is the first step.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 34.

Mrs. LOWEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today as a proud cosponsor and strong supporter of H. Res. 34, a Resolution "Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the U.S.'s strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

I believe unequivocally that Israel has the right and responsibility to defend itself and its citizens. I stand in support and solidarity with Israel's efforts to end Hamas' campaign of terror. For years, Hamas has fired thousands of rockets into Israel, murdering Israeli civilians and terrorizing peaceful communities. Earlier this year I traveled to the Western Negev and saw first-hand the trauma suffered by women and children who faced nearly daily rocket attacks from Gaza. While war is never a preferred option, after repeated calls to Hamas to end rocket attacks, Israel had no choice but to respond militarily to Hamas' breaking of the cease-fire.

During its operation in Gaza, Israel has taken extraordinary steps to prevent civilian casualties, including providing advanced warning to civilians about pending attacks of Hamas targets. I am dismayed and disgusted with Hamas' tactics of co-locating their terrorist infrastructure amongst the civilian population. My heart goes out to the families of the innocent civilians killed and wounded on both sides of the conflict; however, Hamas bears the responsibility for the loss of life and the humanitarian situation of residents of Gaza.

Hamas, which continues to deny Israel's right to exist, will stop at nothing to deny peace to the region, including exploiting and endangering Gaza civilians. I believe that Israel's operation to dismantle Hamas's terrorist infrastructure will provide space to reinvigorate support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. It is my hope that the Israeli operation will make it clear to Hamas that its attacks on Israeli communities must end so that negotiations toward a peaceful coexistence in the region can continue.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support of the right of Israel to exist and to defend itself and to condemn unequivocally the rocket attacks launched by Hamas on Israel. I believe there can be no military solution to this conflict, only a political solution reached by the parties assisted by the United States acting as an honest broker. Seldom do I vote present but I will in this case. Let me explain why.

First, the resolution ought to make it clear that the only way to remove the threat to Israel, and to the larger region, is to resolve these issues through an immediate cease-fire and commit the United States to high-level and sustained diplomacy in support of the Road Map and initiatives. This resolution does not address how to end the escalating violence.

Second, the resolution should offer concrete steps to be taken immediately to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The resolution is silent on this point.

The bottom line is there is absolutely no military resolution to the issues confronting this region—notwithstanding the acts of self-defense to which Israel has resorted.

That is why I renew my call for the administration to redouble its efforts in discharging its indispensable role as honest broker in the peace process needed to realize the two-state solution and secure Israel's right to peaceful co-existence and the right of the Palestinians to live in dignity.

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my overwhelming support for Israel's right to defend her people against terrorist attacks.

Over the past 6 months, we have seen a relative calm between Israelis and Palestinians due to an Egyptian brokered cease-fire.

Unfortunately, however, this calm was used by Hamas to rearm themselves with more technologically-advanced rockets and weapons, which were smuggled through tunnels from Egypt and over the Syrian border.

When the cease-fire expired on December 19, 2008, Hamas refused to extend it and began to fire its updated arsenal of rockets deep into Southern Israel.

Sadly, rocket fire is nothing new to the Israelis, who have seen 6000 rockets land in Southern Israel since unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza in 2005.

Hamas had a choice this past December—extend the cease-fire or continue hostilities. They chose war over peace.

Israel was forced by Hamas' action to make a choice too, either live with the threat of rocket fire against her people or take action to keep its people safe from harm. They made the choice any reasonable nation would make—to defend its citizens.

It is time for the Palestinians in Gaza to have better representation—representation that puts the peoples' well-being before Hamas' unachievable goals.

The U.S. Congress and the people of the United States will not allow a terrorist organization, like Hamas, to destroy the thriving democracy that is Israel.

We stand with Israel and her goal of peace.

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34, the Gaza Conflict Resolution.

Israel has been under attack, and like any sovereign nation it has the right to defend itself. I steadfastly support Israel as it continues to undertake operations to ensure the security of its citizens. Israel is America's friend and ally and I support its pursuit of security and its objective of self defense in the face of continued attacks on its existence. Hamas is a terrorist organization and its actions undermine the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The U.S. must do everything it can to help reach a resolution that begins with an immediate end to Hamas rocket fire on Israel and includes efforts to provide for the humanitarian needs of all civilians. The U.S. should continue to be thoroughly involved in the region in order to ensure Israel's security and help achieve sustained peace.

In support of these goals, I urge passage of this resolution.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, the resolution before the House today, H. Res. Israel's bombardment of the citizens of Gaza, sanctions the incursion of Israeli troops into Gaza to clear this occupied territory of Hamas

fighters regardless of the human cost, and calls for "supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process" while innocent Palestinian women and children are being killed in Gaza. This resolution strongly and justifiably condemns Hamas, but the resolution's intent and substance are void of any relation to the hellish reality that is being inflicted on the citizens of Gaza right now or the deprivation inflicted upon Gaza families by Israel's harsh denial of food, medicine and fuel over the past year.

This is only the latest battle in a long war for respect and security between Israel and the Palestinian people. Israeli citizens have suffered for years under an intermittent but terrifying rocket bombardments launched by militants in the Gaza Strip. Since 2001, 20 Israelis have been killed by these rockets, hundreds injured, and the lives of many thousands more disrupted by the constant fear of random and indiscriminate violence from the sky. When this summer's tenuous cease-fire broke down, the rocket attacks increased precipitously, prompting Israel's current military operation in Gaza.

I recognize Israel's right to protect its citizens from the persistent and growing threat of rocket attacks. However, as an unwavering proponent of peace, and as an advocate for the rights and security of the Israeli and Palestinian people, I seriously question the proportionality of Israel's response and regretfully predict that Israel's military action will produce only short-term security gains while severely undermining the prospects of peace in the months and years ahead.

Despite the fact too many Israeli citizens are under great stress from Hamas rockets, these weapons do not represent an existential threat to Israel. Rather than a serious military challenge, these rockets are like a drug gang that uses drive by shootings as a tactic to terrify a neighborhood. When is the solution to this type of terror for authorities to lay waste to the neighborhood?

Recent weeks of Israeli air and ground assaults have resulted in nearly 800 deaths, half of these innocent civilians. A population of 1.5 million Gazans, already weakened by previous months of economic blockade, are suffering from a lack of food, water, electricity and essential medicine. With border crossings closed, civilians are literally caught in the crossfire between Hamas militants and the Israeli army with no ability to escape. The difficult situation that existed in Gaza prior to Israel's attack has quickly deteriorated into a humanitarian disaster.

The world is watching as Israel's bombardment in Gaza continues to escalate. Public opinion around the world is hardening against Israel as desperate images of destruction reach the media. For example, a high-ranking Vatican official has compared the conditions in Gaza to "a big concentration camp." An Israeli official condemned the comments and chastised the Catholic leader's words as "far removed from truth and dignity." But after 13 days of warfare it is reported by officials in Gaza that more than 750 people are dead, of which 40 percent are women and children.

Last night, the United Nations Security Council voted and approved a resolution for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire" leading to a "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza. The resolution also called for humanitarian aid to pass into Gaza and an end to trafficking of weapons into the

occupied territory. The United States, represented by Secretary of State Rice, did not join the 14 other nations approving the measure, our Government abstained.

The Bush administration has failed to successfully work for an immediate cease-fire. And this resolution fails to call for an immediate cease-fire in Gaza. What this resolution does do is allow Israel to continue its efforts to eliminate the threat of Hamas, which will only lead to further civilian deaths. With nearly 800 Gazans already dead and Israel's international image equally bloodied, there is no victory left for either side to achieve, the present battle has become a competition for biggest loser.

An immediate cease-fire is the only option. The current fighting must end before the foundations of the peace process are undermined any further and the prospects of a two state solution are dealt a final blow. The United States Government must recapture its role as an honest broker in the Israel-Palestinian conflict and urgently commit its full energy and resources to achieving a ceasefire and sustaining its engagement to ensure the causes of the present violence—arms smuggling, rocket fire, economic blockade—are resolved.

The continued isolation of Gaza is an unacceptable option in light of the depravation and increasing desperation of the mothers, fathers and children of Gaza. If the humanitarian needs in Gaza are not quickly and comprehensively addressed, the world faces the prospect of a radicalized generation of Palestinian youth—over 56 percent Gazans are under the age of 16. America should lead an international effort, initiated immediately after declaration of a ceasefire, to heal and rebuild Gaza. The memory of the present conflict cannot be erased from the minds and hearts of Palestinian youth, but we can ensure those memories include a generous and meaningful response from the world.

The goal of the United States, and the world, must be to work for peace. And the path to peace will never be forged through violence.

For these reasons, it is my intention to vote present on H. Res. 34.

Ms. EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of H. Res. 34, the Gaza Conflict Resolution. We must end the current violence and bloodshed among both Palestinians and Israelis. This resolution reaffirms our support for Israel but additionally reaffirms our commitment toward a continuing peace process.

With this resolution, we call for an end to the rocket and missile attacks from Hamas and ask that they recognize previous cease fire agreements between Israel and Palestine.

In response to the attacks, however, Israel, as a sovereign nation, does maintain the right to defend its borders and citizens from aggression. This basic right to protect our people is not one that we should undermine. Our country knows too well that a response must be made when we are attacked and our way of life disrupted. However, there must be humanitarian considerations in any conflict, and there must be steps taken to protect civilians and prevent attacks on innocent school children.

In both countries, as a result of the attacks and subsequent response, civilians are being killed, injured and witnesses to horrific tragedy. Humanitarian aid has only recently been allowed into Palestine and there is no doubt

that there is terrible human suffering on all sides.

It is my hope that this resolution will help offer a roadmap to a peaceful solution, and that there will soon be an end to the violence. We cannot forget that beneath the politics, there is great human tragedy.

I will support this resolution, but believe that we must focus on ending this continuing violence and search for a peaceful solution for all parties involved.

Mr. DEFAZIO. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to H. Res. 34. While I fully support the right of Israel to defend itself and its citizens, the resolution before us today appears to endorse the failed strategies and policies of the Bush Administration in finding a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Bush Administration quashed a real effort towards peace begun by the Clinton Administration and turned a blind eye towards 8 years of unnecessary and avoidable turmoil.

The peace process lost many years of progress and the incoming Obama administration faces a great challenge to reconstruct the broken peace process. President-elect Obama and his designee for Secretary of State, HILARY CLINTON, must take immediate steps to engage key international players in an attempt to restart talks towards a two-state solution to the conflict. This will be difficult and slow, but necessary to find long-term peace for a region strained by violence.

The House resolution before us today does not reflect the complexities of the current conflict and would not help the incoming Obama administration in bringing about the necessary changes in U.S. foreign policy to promote a lasting peace in the region. The world is excited and hopeful with a new administration that has promised a return to a cooperative U.S. foreign policy. This resolution fails to reflect that hope. Therefore, I voted present on H. Res. 34.

Mr. PUTNAM. Madam Speaker, no one can view the reports of innocent lives lost on both sides of the Israeli border without a sense of mourning and a strong desire to see the violence stop. Some criticize the degree to which Israel has responded to the most recent rocket attacks, but it is inconceivable that any nation would tolerate rockets or missiles being fired at it by another nation.

Nations not only have the right to self-defense, but an obligation to protect their citizens. Recognizing this fundamental right, the Israeli government responded to the Hamas rocket fire in the only manner available to them—by attacking the buildings that house Hamas leaders and the sites where it is believed weapons have been stockpiled.

Unfortunately, in addition to killing militants, civilians have also died as a result of Hamas' exploitation of hospitals, schools, and mosques to store weaponry and conceal terrorist activities. The loss of civilian lives during any military engagement is tragic, but it should not go unnoticed that Hamas selfishly relishes in martyrdom at the expense of the innocent Palestinians.

The actions of Hamas are unacceptable and must come to a stop immediately. Hamas initiated the attacks and now cynically cries foul when Israel responds. Those who blame Israel are playing into the hands of the extremists who are opposed to substantive peace.

I wholeheartedly believe that we must find a solution that brings peace to the region. Bear

in mind that reaching an agreement in the Middle East has been a goal among peace-loving nations since the founding of Israel.

The key point in the conflict, nonetheless, has been the refusal of a number of governments and militant organizations, including Hamas, to accept the fundamental premise that Israel has the right to exist. Without agreement on this point, peace will be impossible to achieve.

The onus is on Hamas to suspend its attacks on Israel and to call for a renewed cease-fire. Perhaps, then serious negotiations can resume with the goal of bringing peaceful coexistence in the Middle East. As one of our closest allies, we should continue to support Israel in their quest for peace and endeavor to stop terrorism in the region.

Mr. MICA. Madam Speaker, I strongly support Israel's right to defend itself against the Hamas terrorist attacks. Until Israeli citizens can live without fear of these attacks, Israel is justified in its effort to maintain national security for its citizens.

While we all hope for peace in this region, it must not come at the expense of Israel's sovereignty or right to exist. The Gaza Strip, from which Israel unilaterally withdrew in 2005, poses a growing security threat to Israeli civilians. Over 10,000 rocket and mortar shells have been fired from Gaza since 2001, and this indiscriminate bombardment has escalated since Hamas seized power in their violent coup in 2007. About 860,000 Israeli civilians, or more than 12 percent of Israel's population, live in daily fear of a Hamas rocket attack.

Hamas ended the 6-month cease fire on December 19th by increasing its random rocket bombardment of Israeli civilians. Israel was compelled to take on the responsibility of defending its citizens against these terror tactics. In response to being attacked, it launched a defensive air attack against Hamas' terrorist rocket launchers and their terrorist infrastructure. Israel responded with a ground assault to minimize collateral losses in the civilian neighborhoods the Hamas terrorists hide in to launch these rockets.

Critics of Israel demand it sit down with Hamas to negotiate a lasting peace. I ask them all, how do you find a diplomatic solution with an enemy that will not recognize your right to exist? What terms can you offer that will bring peace with such an enemy other than outright capitulation?

Madam Speaker, let us stand together as an institution to show our Nation's support for Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and pledge our continued commitment to Israel's right to defend itself as a free, independent and sovereign state.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, When a nation's towns and villages are attacked, without provocation, by nearly 9,000 rockets over the span of 8 years, there could hardly be a more solid case for the use of force in self-defense. At least 700,000 Israelis—10 percent of that small nation—are now within range of missiles and rockets operated by an Islamist terrorist group committed to Israel's destruction.

I have no trouble justifying the war Israel has undertaken. I am deeply troubled, however, by the suffering, destruction, and loss of innocent life that war inevitably entails—in this case, a war forced upon Israel by a terrorist enemy that not only targets Israeli civilians but also bases itself among Gazan Palestinian

homes, schools, mosques, and hospitals in order to use innocent civilians as human shields and as tools of a propaganda war.

It is imperative that a way be found to stop the killing on both sides—but in a manner that will ensure that this round will be the last round.

I know the United States and several other nations are working on developing such a plan. Our ally Egypt should be particularly commended for its serious efforts in this regard.

What we need is not merely a cease-fire but a transformative cease-fire. We need to ensure not just that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel; we need to make sure that it stops receiving weapons and weapons parts and stops smuggling them into the Gaza Strip. We should support Egyptian efforts to prevent this illegal arms trade from crossing the Sinai toward the Gaza border.

Ideally, the legitimate Palestinian Authority under President Mahmoud Abbas should be restored to its role as the effective authority in Gaza in the aftermath of any cease-fire. The Palestinian Authority was illegally expelled from Gaza by Hamas in June 2007, and it should be restored to its rightful role.

As for Hamas, it has no prospect of legitimization in the international community unless it renounces violence and disarms, recognizes Israel, and accepts the validity of all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians.

Our resolution supports Israel's right to defend itself against unprovoked terror and reaffirms this body's unwavering commitment to Israel's security and survival as a democratic, Jewish state. It condemns Hamas for its 8-year artillery war against Israel and appropriately assigns Hamas responsibility for the destructive consequences of the ongoing war in Gaza. And it insists that a cease-fire be established that is durable and sustainable and that prevents Hamas from acquiring more arms and provoking another round of fighting.

I commend the Speaker and the bipartisan leadership for authoring this important resolution. It provides a sensible way of understanding how we got to the current situation and of how we should move forward. That is why I support this resolution, and I urge my colleagues to do likewise.

Mr. MORAN of Virginia. Madam Speaker, I will vote "present" on Resolution 34. While the intent of this resolution is to speak out against terrorism and to reiterate U.S. support for Israel's security, I am deeply concerned that the message it send may be contrary to the best interests of both Israel and the Palestinians. A solution to this crisis in the Middle East must be diplomatic; it will not be achieved by military force.

The resolution contains many facts, but it omits others that are important. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported January 8 that since the Israeli military operation "Cast Lead" began, 758 Palestinians have been killed, including 60 women and 257 children. More than 3,000 Palestinians have been injured. Israeli media reported that 11 Israelis have been killed, most of them soldiers, 3 from "friendly fire." Of paramount concern today is to stop the loss of life, to allow medical supplies and personnel to enter Gaza, and to provide emergency care to those who have been injured.

The citizens of Gaza, most of whom are refugees, have nowhere to go. They are pre-

vented from fleeing into Israel or Egypt and are cornered in one of the most populated areas in the world.

This resolution emphasizes Israel's right to defend itself. Of course it has that right. But we also need to stand strongly in solidarity with both Israelis and Palestinians who want peace and an end to the horrific cycle of violence that manifests itself so horribly in Gaza today. I agree that the ultimate goal of the United States is a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will ensure the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and a viable, independent, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. Unfortunately, I do not believe this resolution moves us closer to this goal, and because of this, I vote present.

Mr. SKELTON. Madam Speaker, let me take this means to express my support for H. Res. 34. Israel, which has been our ally since President Truman recognized this country in 1948, could no longer tolerate relentless attacks on its citizens by Hamas and took military action to prevent future attacks. Israel must defend itself, as would any nation in the face of such provocation.

The United States and the international community must work to support an enduring cease fire that ends missile attacks by Hamas, prevents illegal arms and explosives from entering Gaza, and sets in motion a diplomatic solution that will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace. Only when the cycle of violence in this troubled region is broken will Israelis and Palestinians be able to enjoy the peace and prosperity that people everywhere deserve.

Mr. McGOVERN. Madam Speaker, I will vote in support of H. Res. 34, the Gaza Conflict Resolution. Certainly, everyone recognizes Israel's legitimate right to defend itself, the need for a ceasefire, and the demand that Hamas stop its rocket attacks against Israel, recognize the right of Israel to exist, and join the rest of the Palestinian people in negotiations with Israel to reach agreement on a two-state solution to the Middle East conflict and establish peace for all the peoples of the region. Earlier this month, I issued a statement outlining these same key concerns.

However, I would like to clearly express my frustration and dissatisfaction with what has not been included in this resolution.

I strongly believe the resolution should have included and expressed support for the concerns raised by the International Committee of the Red Cross, ICRC and United Nations field staff on the ground inside Gaza about potential violations of international humanitarian law, IHL by both parties. I am particularly concerned about potential violations of IHL by Israel because I am such a strong supporter of Israel.

I am also disappointed that the resolution did not reference the resolution passed by the U.N. Security Council on January 8, calling for an immediate ceasefire. While the UNSC resolution is flawed by its failure to condemn Hamas rocket attacks, it is an important call for a cessation of hostilities, which H. Res. 34 also demands.

Finally, I am deeply saddened and disturbed by the increasing toll on Israeli and Gazan citizens as this most recent escalation in the conflict over Gaza continues. Military operations

must stop; the rocket attacks must stop; and all regional and international actors must engage Hamas and Israel to agree to a durable and verifiable cessation of hostilities.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, the resolution before us correctly condemns the actions by Hamas to target innocent civilians in southern Israel and to thwart the ceasefire that had been in place for the previous 6 months. It correctly calls for a new, sustainable ceasefire and affirms the U.S. commitment to a just and durable peace based on a two-state solution. But the resolution does not begin to do justice to the humanitarian disaster gripping Gaza, and it offers little more than lip service on behalf of a serious peace process. Focusing on affixing blame for the current crisis, it fails to emphasize the steps required to lead us toward a long-term solution.

I recently wrote an article which appeared in the January 6 Charlotte Observer and Miami Herald in which I proposed immediate actions the U.S. must take to return us to a trajectory leading to a just and lasting peace. I ask permission that it be included in the RECORD. After the conflict ends and the dust settles, after all the recriminations and resentments have been aired, we will be left with the crucial question of whether and how to resume efforts toward a lasting peace. This is the only goal that can meet our and Israel's long-term security needs in the region. We must act urgently, knowing that the steps we take now will determine just how steep that future road to peace will be.

U.S. MUST ACT NOW IN GAZA (By Representative David Price)

For observers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict committed to a peaceful and lasting two-state resolution, the conflict between Israel and Hamas in Gaza brings the temptation to throw one's hands in the air in despair. Mistaken assumptions and lessons left unlearned seem to guide each of the protagonists down a course antithetical to the long-term interests of both Israelis and Palestinians.

We can't help but lament another cycle of retributive violence—both for the terrible toll it takes on both sides and because we know it is not the way forward. Yet exasperation and passivity are indulgences that the United States and the world can ill afford.

FIGHTING VS. GOVERNING

For its part, Hamas has again proven that it would rather fight than govern or tend to the needs of Gazans, making it exceedingly difficult to envision it as a serious partner at the negotiating table. Israel, while unquestionably justified in its move to put an end to the daily barrage of rockets falling upon its citizens, seems to have forgotten the lessons of the 2006 Lebanon war, during which its use of massive force alienated the Arab world and turned Hezbollah into freedom fighters in the eyes of many Lebanese. And the Bush administration once again offers little—only an unconditional green light to follow the fight, now a full-scale ground war, wherever it leads.

It is difficult to imagine how the current conflict might ultimately lead to a just and lasting peace. Hamas, though militarily debilitated, is not likely to disappear as a political force or to suddenly prove more pliable in negotiations. It may become more rather than less difficult to bring Gaza under the authority of President Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah, lest they be seen as capitalizing on the misery wrought by the fighting.

And Israel, while addressing a key short-term security objective, risks far-reaching damage to the peace process that is essential to its most critical long-term security objective: a resolution to the conflict. Equally troubling, the overwhelming force of its bombardment has buttressed support for extremist elements, like Hezbollah and the Iranian government, that threaten Israeli and regional security.

As ominous as the picture may be, it is strongly in the interests of our own country to ensure that the architecture of the peace process is not irreparably damaged. To do so, the United States should take several immediate steps, even as the Bush administration draws anemically to a close.

HUMANITARIAN CRISIS LOOMS

First, the administration, working with the international community, must take swift action to avert a massive humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Gazans have been on the verge of a humanitarian meltdown for months; the bombing of border tunnels—which have been used to smuggle food and humanitarian supplies, in addition to weapons—pushes Gaza further toward collapse.

Secondly, the administration should urgently engage Israel, along with regional allies like Egypt, Jordan, and Saudi Arabia, in putting together the framework for a sustainable long-term cease-fire, not simply a temporary halt to fighting. Such a framework must protect Israel from the persistent rocket fire on Sderot and from Hamas's stockpiling of deadly weapons. But it also must provide relief from the devastating embargo on Gaza. To be effective, it must involve Egypt and regional partners as mediators and monitors.

COLLATERAL CONSEQUENCES

Coming on the heels of the 2006 Lebanon war, Israel's military actions in Gaza have had the unfortunate collateral consequence of generating substantial domestic political unrest for many of Israel's friendliest Arab neighbors, particularly Egypt. The United States will need to walk a fine diplomatic line, encouraging Arab nations to lead Hamas toward a sustainable ceasefire while empowering them to advocate for the just peace their citizens demand.

Finally, both President Bush and, as soon as he takes office, President-elect Obama should explicitly express the United States' unwavering commitment to a viable peace process and undertake diplomacy toward that end. How the present conflict is waged, and on what terms it is halted, will be especially consequential on the Palestinian side of the equation.

The U.S., Israel and moderate Sunni regimes have not done enough to help President Abbas and Fatah gain credibility, and that task is now even more urgent and challenging. As for Hamas, while its military capabilities may be downgraded by the conflict, its political stock may rise. The organization and its constituency must be taken into account, directly and indirectly, in any viable process. Regional mediations and renewed Israeli-Syrian talks should figure prominently in such efforts.

These steps will not resolve the conflict. But they will help preserve the possibility of a future peace, a possibility that is now teetering on the brink.

Mr. POSEY. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of House Resolution 34 which recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, there was hope from many that this was an

opportunity for peace. Sadly, this has not been the case. Since then more than 3 years have passed and approximately 6,400 rockets have been fired from Gaza into Israeli civilian communities by Hamas and other pro-Palestinian organizations. Their goal: to kill, maim, terrorize and traumatize innocent Israeli civilians.

My friends, this total disregard for human life must be condemned in the strongest possible terms. These terrorist groups, some of which we know are supported by Iran and Syria, have left the Israeli Government no choice but to defend the lives of their citizens.

And to make matters worse, Hamas has been using its own people—families and children—as human shields when launching their sinister rocket attacks. Hamas terrorists have chosen to launch missiles into Israel from civilian sites intentionally placing the lives of Palestinians at risk. This shows their total disregard not only for the lives of Israelis, but for the lives of Palestinians as well.

The world must come together and condemn the use of these outrageous and cowardly tactics against civilian communities and recognize Israel's right as a sovereign and democratic nation to protect its citizens and borders from unprovoked terrorism. I urge my colleagues to stand up and support H. Res. 34 and recognize Israel's right to do whatever it takes to protect the lives of its citizens.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise today to recognize Israel's right to defend itself and to express my desire for a peaceful and lasting resolution to the current conflict.

In September of 2005, the Israeli government completed an evacuation of all Israeli citizens from Gaza. This historic evacuation, ordered by then-Prime Minister Ariel Sharon, was not widely popular throughout Israel but Mr. Sharon felt it was an important and necessary step in the quest for a 2-state solution. Soon after the evacuation, in January 2006, Hamas won 2/3 of the parliamentary elections in Gaza and took over as the democratically-elected government of the Palestinian people.

Since their election, Hamas has ignored the conciliatory actions of Israel and they have seen their popularity plummet because of this and their steadfast refusal to recognize the existence of Israel. So much was expected of the new Palestinian leadership following the death of Yassir Arafat but the leadership of Hamas has failed its people, and continues to be corrupt. This failed leadership came to a head on December 19th when Hamas ended the six-month cease fire with Israel and fired over 50 rockets into Israel.

After continued rocket attacks into heavily populated areas, Israel had no choice but to retaliate with force against Hamas and protect Israeli citizens. Hamas leadership knew Israel would respond, but still may have been surprised by the forcefulness with which the Israelis defended their citizens. Once the Israelis made clear they would not tolerate the rocket attacks, Hamas leaders followed a time-honored terrorist tradition of hiding amongst and under the people they should have been leading and protecting.

Following Israel's continued defense of its homeland, some have demanded Israel stop its targeted strikes into Gaza. This would only allow Hamas foot soldiers to continue resupplying their terrorist network and would offer little assurance that Hamas will refrain from targeting Israeli civilians. It is regrettable that Hamas continues firing rockets into Israel and

as recently as Wednesday, rockets were fired into Israel from Lebanon.

I will continue to support the right of Israel to defend itself and encourage the people of Gaza to demand that their elected leaders cease the unjustified rocket attacks and the conscious choice to act as terrorists. Furthermore, I command Egypt on its continuing role as an evenhanded facilitator of peace negotiations and urge other Middle Eastern nations to follow suit.

Mr. MORAN of Kansas. Madam Speaker, I rise in support of Israel's right to defend its citizens and H. Res. 34. Confronted with repeated, indiscriminate attacks on its citizens, Israel is engaged in an effort to ensure its people can live in peace and without fear of rocket and mortar attacks. As one of our strongest allies, it is critical Israel knows it has the support and backing of the United States in this effort. I support Israel's right to defend itself and encourage my colleagues to join me in sending a strong message of support to Israel by voting for this legislation.

In addition to expressing vigorous support for the welfare, security and survival of Israel, the resolution also encourages the Administration to work actively to support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza that prevents Hamas from retaining or rebuilding its terrorist infrastructure. It is my hope that both groups will implement a swift end to this conflict that ensures future peace and stop unnecessary civilian casualties.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today regarding H. Res. 34, concerning the fighting now taking place in the Gaza Strip between Israel and Hamas.

Like every Member of the House, I support the right of Israel to defend itself and its people. I join my colleagues in strongly denouncing the ongoing, indiscriminate, and destabilizing rocket attacks being launched by Hamas against the civilian population of southern Israel, and in denouncing Hamas' clear intent to continue to terrorize the people of Israel.

I call on Hamas to end its rocket attacks against Israel immediately.

Like every one of my colleagues here, I am also deeply saddened and troubled by the latest round of fighting in the Middle East, the loss of life to children and their families, the vast destruction of homes, and the enormous suffering that is being caused by the escalation of this conflict.

Today the House was asked to insert its voice into this latest conflict between Israel and Hamas. H. Res. 34 states, in part, that the House "recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

I support much of the language in this resolution but I regret that H. Res. 34 in its entirety is not the correct statement for the House to make at this time.

America's support for Israel and its right to exist is unquestionable.

What is in question and what is the most important issue for the House and the international community to consider is how the Israeli people will be able to live in peace and without the constant threat of attack from Hamas or others, and how the United States and all other nations can assist in achieving that outcome.

The resolution today does not adequately address that concern, nor does it adequately address the complex political facts on the ground in the Middle East. Therefore, I have chosen to vote “present” on this resolution. I do not oppose Israel’s right to defend itself and therefore I will not vote against the resolution. But I do not believe this resolution helps to resolve the current conflict and therefore I cannot vote for it.

What the House of Representatives should do at this moment in time is to throw its considerable weight behind the call for an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. A cease fire is in the best interests of Israel and the United States and I call on Israel and Hamas to agree to an immediate cease fire.

The fact is that there has been a failure of political leadership that has led to this renewed and devastating fighting in Gaza. The Bush Administration has failed to adequately or successfully address the Middle East conflict, and the international community has failed to adequately address the conflict between Israel and Hamas.

Experts on the Middle East had warned that a conflict of this nature would eventually come if conditions on the ground did not change. Their warnings went unheeded and now a new and costly war has broken out.

Hamas’ rocket attacks against Israel are indefensible. But neither can the disproportionate military response by Israel be defended. The latest fighting was preceded by a lengthy and crushing blockade by Israel of Gaza that caused a humanitarian crisis. Hamas chose to break the cease fire and continue shelling Israel. And Israel chose to use the breaking of that cease fire to launch an all out attack on Gaza.

Lost in all of this is the answer to the question of how the Israeli people can be assured the protection they deserve. The rocket attacks against Israel continue despite the enormous firepower brought against Hamas by Israel. There is no clear answer as to how Israel will bring this conflict to an end in Gaza nor is it clear what are Israel’s ultimate goals in this conflict.

Only a cease fire and a new international commitment to negotiate a cessation of hostilities between Hamas and Israel can protect the people of Israel. This is also in the best interest of the United States, which is so closely identified with Israel throughout the world.

I urge my colleagues in the House, who clearly are concerned about the protection of the Israeli people, to use their voices to call for an immediate cease fire and to urge all interested parties to make the cessation of hostilities between Hamas and Israel a priority.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34. This important resolution recognizes Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, while at the same time supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process and recognizing that the humanitarian needs in Gaza should be promptly addressed.

For fourteen days, now, Israel has launched airstrikes and now, a ground invasion in response to thousands of Hamas-sanctioned rocket attacks on Israeli towns from the Gaza Strip. The strikes began less than a week after the expiration of a six-month-long ceasefire deal with Hamas—during which time, Hamas continually violated the cease-fire and shot rockets into southern Israel. Israel has a right

to defend itself from these attacks and when Hamas announced that it was ending its “period of calm,” Israel began to do just that.

I have visited Israel on several occasions, and have seen the struggles Israelis face daily. I have even been to Sderot, Israel and have seen how close these attacks are and how they affect the families that live there. During these visits, I have seen the Israelis’ perseverance and determination to create a peaceful and prosperous state despite Hamas’ continued refusal to work towards a peaceful resolution. Hamas must end this violence and commit itself to a real truce. Without this, I believe that there is little chance for peace in the region.

Israel and the United States have been close friends and allies for the past sixty years. Our relations have evolved from an initial American policy of sympathy and support for the creation of a Jewish homeland in 1948 to a key partnership based on common economic interests, common security interests, and most of all common values. We must continue to cultivate this relationship and encourage peace in the region.

Mr. MARKEY of Massachusetts. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support for H. Res. 34, a resolution recognizing Israel’s right to defend itself, reaffirming the United States support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

I am deeply concerned about the situation in Gaza, and I am deeply saddened by the loss of innocent life on both sides. Every innocent death or injury in this conflict is a tragedy.

The United States must play a central role in bringing the parties together to stop the violence, and must forcefully engage to restart the peace process so that the dream of two states living side by side in peace finally can be made a reality. For too many years, the war in Iraq has distracted the United States from what should be its number one priority in the Middle East: bringing peace to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Finding a just, lasting, and equitable solution to the conflict is not only vital for Israelis and Palestinians; it is also very much in our national interest. I am very hopeful that the incoming Obama administration will reengage the United States at the highest levels to complete the peace process.

The resolution we are considering today appropriately recognizes the fact that Hamas has been designated by the United States as a terrorist organization. Hamas continues to reject the very right of Israel to exist and refuses to renounce violence. Hamas has launched thousands of rockets and mortars against Israeli population centers since 2001. Instead of laying the foundation for an independent state following Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza more than three years ago, Hamas turned Gaza into a launch pad for rockets targeting Israeli civilians. Hamas has launched more than 6,000 rockets and mortars at Israel since Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005.

Israel has the right and obligation to protect its citizens from the thousands of rockets that have rained down on its cities and towns since Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza. These rocket attacks must stop.

Hamas is not only indiscriminately firing rockets at Israeli civilians; it is also damaging the future for all Palestinians who seek a normal life for themselves and their families. Peace will only result from a political process of engagement and negotiation, not from volleys of rockets.

The incoming Obama Administration has a golden opportunity to breathe new life into the peace process, and I am committed to working with President Obama to stop the violence, get the peace process back on track and establish the security that all residents of the region urgently need.

Madam Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support the resolution.

Mrs. MALONEY. Madam Speaker, I rise to express my support for H. Res. 34.

The resolution places the blame for the situation in Gaza exactly where it belongs, squarely on the shoulders of Hamas.

It makes clear that Israel has a right to defend itself and that the path to peace in the region lies in the recognition of Israel’s right to exist, the dismantling of Hamas’ terrorist infrastructure and the release of Gilad Shalit.

For the last eight years, more than 10,000 missiles have fallen on Israel’s civilian population centers, killing 28, injuring more than 700 and traumatizing tens of thousands.

Hamas violates international law by embedding its weapons in civilian centers and using its people as human shields.

Its cynical choice to reap public relations success from the bodies of their own civilians is reprehensible.

These are the irresponsible acts of madmen and cowards, not rulers who can hope to lead a nation.

I hope that President-elect Obama will be willing to spend political capital in calling upon the international community to work together to prevent Hamas from rebuilding.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution and to take a strong stand against the morally bankrupt actions of Hamas.

Ms. MOORE of Wisconsin. Madam Speaker, Israel is a strong ally of our country and has a right to defend itself and I have voted on a number of times—along with a large majority of my colleagues in the House—to make clear our support of that right. According to one estimate, as many as one million Israelis live in range of rockets that have been fired from Gaza by militants. No one questions the responsibility or right of a sovereign nation to protect its people.

However, the deaths of innocent civilians wherever they may occur concerns me. I join my colleagues in condemning all acts of violence and hostilities against civilians and acts of terrorism. While Hamas may be indifferent to the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis as a result of its actions, the rest of the world must not share that indifference.

It is distressing to see this volatile region again paralyzed by a new chapter of a seemingly endless cycle of retributive violence in which no side really wins and innocent civilians lose the most. We must push to break this destructive cycle. The U.S. regional actors, and the international community all need to move quickly to defuse this situation and help to reach a cease-fire by all sides while addressing the security and humanitarian issues that cannot be allowed to continue to fester.

The unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the firing of rockets into Israel do not serve the best interest of anyone truly concerned with securing permanent peace in the region. That is why it is even more important that this House take up a resolution that makes a serious call for and helps strongly support ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring an

end to the violence, demands greater U.S. leadership and engagement in those efforts, and recognizes the great loss suffered by the Israeli and Palestinian people as a result of the violence and urges a swift end to that violence. Unfortunately, the bill before us today is not such a resolution.

Hamas' own actions time and time again show that it is a threat to regional and international peace. This is not in dispute. The House has rightly condemned Hamas time and time again including passage last March of H. Res. 951—which I supported.

However, I have several concerns about other aspects of the resolution before us today. At a time of increasing international concern about the situation in Gaza highlighted by diplomatic efforts under way at the UN, by the EU, and the Arab League—particularly a proposal put forth by Egypt and France—and the passage just last night by the UN Security Council of a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire, I fear that this may be the wrong time for a resolution that does little to support efforts to halt the conflict.

The Security Council resolution called urgently for an “immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza.” I am disappointed that the resolution before the House today does not support the UN’s call for an immediate and verifiable cease-fire by both sides.

When a clear international consensus and diplomatic efforts are beginning to coalesce and work towards a solution, why would the U.S. Congress want to consider a resolution that takes a sharply different tack?

The resolution before us also differs in a number of ways even from a similar resolution that the Senate passed just yesterday. That Senate resolution takes a much more serious approach and puts a greater and much needed emphasis on the proactive role the U.S. needs to play to bring this latest crisis to a close. The U.S. has a vast array of diplomatic and other tools that are at the disposal of the President and his foreign policy advisers to help resolve international crises such as this. Now is the time to open that toolbox and actively use those tools.

If anything has been clear from the last eight years it is that when U.S. does not lead and stay in engaged in regional diplomacy, the situation in the region will not get better.

The EU, the UN, the Arab League all recognize that Israel’s military operations must be supplemented and supplanted by a diplomatic resolution that will last. That is why the Egyptians and the French are expending considerable efforts—in the absence of U.S. leadership—to forge a cease-fire agreement that meets Israel’s needs, namely ending the firing of rockets into Israel and preventing Hamas from rearming while also addressing the humanitarian needs of Gazans. Just yesterday, Secretary Rice expressed verbal support for this initiative, stating that these efforts “should not just be applauded, but must be supported” by the international community. But the resolution fails to even bring it up.

The resolution before the House today also expresses support for “diminishing the appeal and influence of extremists in the Palestinian territories and strengthen moderate Palestinians who are committed to a secure and lasting peace.” However, this resolution by its lack of a call for U.S. engagement and lack of

recognition of the suffering of civilians actually undermines this goal—one that I have long advocated and supported—both in its tone and substance. The resolution ignores or fails to apprehend the tremendous damage that is being done to the efforts of moderates—either presently or in the future—by the ongoing conflict that according to one report has generated “incredible bitterness and anger” in the region. To expect our moderate friends in the Middle East to succeed in such an environment is foolhardy at best.

A cease-fire does not diminish or hinder Israel’s right to defend itself. It does help get us back on the path to finding a political and diplomatic solution that will address Israel’s security needs and lead to long-term security and peace. A cease-fire is not an end itself but is desirable as a means to halt violence and chaos in the immediate term while creating room to assure humanitarian aid and for renewed and sustained multilateral negotiations for a sustainable peace.

Congress must speak out to help stop this latest crisis in the Middle East but in a way that our message is fair, tough, and smart and that makes clear that the U.S.—while supporting Israel’s right to self-defense—can be and is an honest broker in the region. I fear that this resolution fails to meet that standard.

The best support that we can give our close friend and ally Israel is by being an impartial and honest broker that can work with all interested parties in the region, Israelis and Palestinians alike. I am wary about continuing to take actions that hinder the ability for the U.S. to be seen as such a mediator and which may throw more obstacles in the way of the incoming administration foreign policy aims.

The ongoing military operations by Israel cannot and should not substitute for a credible long-term diplomatic solution reached with the help of the international agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians that meets the needs and aspirations of both sides that will prevent the return to an endless cycle of violence that guarantees that “security” and peace remains elusive.

Innocent people on both sides want nothing more than to live normal lives with peace and dignity. While I cannot support this resolution in its current form, I strongly encourage the administration and the international community to undertake robust diplomacy to mediate a cross-border cease-fire and to continue to engage in constructive activities, statements, and resolutions will help bring peace to the region and address Israel’s real security needs.

Mr. FARR. Madam Speaker, have a long record of supporting Israel and I have no intention of reversing course. My wish continues to be that Israel will one day soon enjoy a lasting peace with its neighbors.

The resolution before the House today is not an easy vote for me. I refuse to vote nay because I continue to support Israel’s right to exist and to defend itself. But I cannot vote yea because in the midst of a humanitarian nightmare in Gaza, this resolution is silent on the need for an immediate cease-fire and the need to actively relieve human suffering.

The resolution is right to condemn the rocket attacks against Southern Israel. These attacks are crimes against humanity. The Hamas rockets endanger thousands of lives, terrorize the Israeli populace and deny the people of Israel and Gaza the peace they both deserve.

However, to introduce a resolution in the midst of a raging war that has the impression of assigning blame does not measure up to the moment.

We’re watching another desperate episode in the cycle of Middle East violence, yet our call for a cease-fire is timid.

We’re watching human suffering at a stomach-turning scale, and our call to relieve suffering is weak.

A spasm of violence is consuming lives and we’re failing to do all that we can to be honest brokers of peace.

I agree with almost all the language in this resolution, so I cannot vote against it. However, I cannot vote in favor of the resolution because it does not do enough to set the stage for lasting peace. My conscience dictates a vote of present, which is the only vote for peace.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. TAUSCHER). The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 34.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair’s prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

LILLY LEDBETTER FAIR PAY ACT OF 2009

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, pursuant to section 5(a) of House Resolution 5, I call up the bill (H.R. 11) to amend title VII of the Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Age Discrimination in Employment Act of 1967, and to modify the operation of the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 and the Rehabilitation Act of 1973, to clarify that a discriminatory compensation decision or other practice that is unlawful under such Acts occurs each time compensation is paid pursuant to the discriminatory compensation decision or other practice, and for other purposes, and ask for its immediate consideration.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 11

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Lilly Ledbetter Fair Pay Act of 2009”.

SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

Congress finds the following:

(1) The Supreme Court in *Ledbetter v. Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.*, 550 U.S. 618 (2007), significantly impairs statutory protections against discrimination in compensation that Congress established and that have been bedrock principles of American law for decades. The Ledbetter decision undermines those statutory protections by unduly restricting the time period in which victims of