

Public Diplomacy, and it deserves our sustained and enthusiastic support.

The commission regularly delivers its findings and makes recommendations to the President, the Congress, the Secretary of State and the general public with easily accessible reports. These reports also include assessments of the scholarly integrity and political neutrality of the cultural and educational exchange programs of the Department of State.

Mr. Speaker, the United States Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy does good and important work. Its mandate should be extended not merely annually, but for nearly 3 years more, as our legislation ensures. I am proud to be the author of this legislation, and I strongly urge my colleagues to support this short, but important, bill.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, we appreciate the gentlelady's work on this bill. The legislation before us today reauthorizes the Advisory Commission on Public Diplomacy through fiscal year 2009. Unique among nations, the United States maintains a vast network of formal and informal contacts with the people of the world and conducts the world's only global foreign policy.

The purpose of public diplomacy is to provide this worldwide audience with information about the United States and to convey an accurate and positive image of our beloved country and our foreign policy objectives. To accomplish this mission, the United States Government has at its disposal a number of important tools, including education and cultural exchange programs, extensive and proactive public affairs programs centered in our embassies, and a network of radio and television services broadcasting accurate and objective programming to a world community.

With H.R. 1003, Congress is reauthorizing the advisory commission for another 2 years to continue its important work to study our public diplomacy programs and reach some useful conclusions about how our government can do a better job of creating a dialogue with foreign audiences.

I urge the commission during the next 2 years to step up its efforts to study in more detail our public diplomacy and broadcasting efforts and advise policymakers in the administration and in Congress on appropriate changes and reforms that will improve our outreach efforts to the people of the world.

Mr. Speaker, I would again emphasize the importance of my bill and urge all of my colleagues to vote in the affirmative.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Ms. WATSON. Mr. Speaker, I have no further requests for time, and I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from California (Ms. WATSON) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 1003.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the bill was passed.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

□ 1230

CALLING FOR RELEASE OF ISRAELI SOLDIERS HELD CAPTIVE BY HAMAS AND HEZBOLLAH

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 107) calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah, and for other purposes, as amended.

The Clerk read as follows:

H. RES. 107

Whereas Israel completed its withdrawal from southern Lebanon on May 24, 2000;

Whereas Congress previously expressed its concern for Israeli soldiers missing in Lebanon and Syrian-controlled territory of Lebanon in Public Law 106-89 (113 Stat. 1305; November 8, 1999), which required the Secretary of State to raise the status of missing Israeli soldiers with appropriate government officials of Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority, and other governments in the region, and to submit to Congress reports on those efforts and any subsequent discovery of relevant information;

Whereas on June 18, 2000, the United Nations Security Council welcomed and endorsed United Nations Secretary-General Kofi Annan's report that Israel had withdrawn completely from Lebanon under the terms of United Nations Security Council Resolution 425 (1978);

Whereas Israel completed its withdrawal from Gaza on September 12, 2005;

Whereas on June 25, 2006, Hamas and allied terrorists crossed into Israel to attack a military post, killing two soldiers and wounding a third, Gilad Shalit, who was kidnapped;

Whereas on July 12, 2006, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel to attack Israeli troops patrolling the Israeli side of the border with Lebanon, killing three, wounding two, and kidnapping Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev;

Whereas Gilad Shalit has been held in captivity by Hamas for more than 7 months;

Whereas Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev have been held in captivity by Hezbollah for more than 6 months;

Whereas Hamas and Hezbollah have withheld all information on the health and welfare of the men they have kidnapped; and

Whereas, contrary to the most basic standards of humanitarian conduct, Hamas and Hezbollah have prevented access to the Israeli captives by competent medical personnel and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) demands that—

(A) Hamas immediately and unconditionally release Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit;

(B) Hezbollah accept the mandate of United Nations Security Council Resolution

1701 (2006) by immediately and unconditionally releasing Israeli soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev; and

(C) Hezbollah and Hamas accede to the most basic standards of humanitarian conduct and allow prompt access to the Israeli captives by competent medical personnel and representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross;

(2) expresses—

(A) its vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders;

(B) its strong support and deep interest in achieving a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state living in peace alongside of the State of Israel;

(C) its ongoing concern and sympathy for the families of Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser, and Eldad Regev and all other missing Israeli soldiers; and

(D) its full commitment to seek the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli captives; and

(3) condemns—

(A) Hamas and Hezbollah for the cross border attacks and kidnappings which precipitated weeks of intensive armed conflict between Israel, Hezbollah, and armed Palestinian groups; and

(B) Iran and Syria, the primary state sponsors of global terrorism and the patrons of Hezbollah and Hamas, for their ongoing support for international terrorism.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) and the gentleman from Arkansas (Mr. BOOZMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from New York.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members have 5 legislative days to revise and extend their remarks and include extraneous materials on the resolution under consideration.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I rise in strong support of this resolution, and I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to first thank Chairman TOM LANTOS and ranking minority member ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN, as well as the ranking minority member on the Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia, MIKE PENCE. These Members joined with me at the very outset of the Congress to introduce H. Res. 107. The resolution is an exercise in compassion and it expresses the sense of the House regarding the three Israeli soldiers who were kidnapped last summer.

As of today, Gilad Shalit has been a captive for 261 days, roughly 8½ months; Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev have been captives for 244 days. That is a day more than 8 months. To date, there has been no access to these men by medical personnel or the Red Cross or Red Crescent.

They have not been permitted to send mail to their loved ones. We don't know if they are ill, we don't know if

they are wounded, we don't know for certain that they are still alive.

Mr. Speaker, their captors have sought to turn these three men into something they are not: Bargaining chips, pawns, a kind of political chattel, things that can be swapped for favors or sacrificed at whim. These three men are not things. They are human beings. They have names and families. They have rights as captured soldiers, and they have rights as individuals. And they also have rights under international law.

The organizations that have taken these men captive have shown their true character. Withholding doctors and medicine, withholding the Red Cross and Red Crescent visits, withholding basic communications with their families, even just the information that they are still alive, these choices and these acts show what kind of men run Hamas and Hezbollah: They are religious, but they are deeply immoral. They are self-righteous, but they are profoundly cruel. They are blustery and proud, but they are sneaky and manipulative. Decent human beings do not behave this way.

Mr. Speaker, decency doesn't depend on international law or multilateral agreements, nor does it depend on nationality. And I am not aware that withholding medical care or basic contact with the outside world is a requirement of either Shia or Sunni Islam, or any of the world's great religions.

This kind of brutality and malice is, unfortunately, typical of these organizations and their state sponsors, Syria and Iran. Syria is a thuggish dictatorship which believes its appetite for the Golan Heights legitimizes any crime or cruelty.

And Iran's repressive theocracy is both the world's leading sponsor of terrorism and its most dangerous proliferation threat. Viciousness is standard operating procedure for both regimes.

We cannot compel such parties to release Gilad, Ehud, and Eldad any more than we can force them to understand the difference between right and wrong. You cannot disgrace someone who is incapable of shame.

But we can and we must stand by our ally, the State of Israel. America has had painfully similar experiences at the hands of the same culprits.

Out of our own bitter experience, we can express our sympathy and our concern for the captives and for their families. We can let the perpetrators of this barbarism know that we have not forgotten what they have done, and what they are continuing to do. We can bear witness, and we can add our voices to all those who are saying, "Enough, enough. Let these men go home."

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Mr. Speaker, last July Israel's sovereign border was violated by terrorists

linked to Hamas who shot and killed two Israeli soldiers and kidnapped Corporal Gilad Shalit.

Days later, terrorists linked to Hezbollah crossed into Israel and killed three and wounded two, and kidnapped soldiers Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. All three have been held captive since without medical attention from humanitarian groups like the Red Cross. No information is known on the fate of these soldiers.

As proxies of the Iranian and Syrian regimes, Hezbollah and Hamas have continued to attack Israel despite Israel's withdrawal from southern Lebanon in 2000 and Gaza in 2005.

Rather than view Israel's withdrawal as an act of good faith to further the cause of peace, Hezbollah and Hamas viewed these measures as signs of weaknesses to exploit. Hamas and Hezbollah, which have representatives in the Palestinian and Lebanese cabinets, believe that terrorism, murder and kidnapping are appropriate means of achieving political objectives, and have proposed negotiations to exchange these hostages for convicted terrorists now serving time in Israeli jails.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution which declares that the House of Representatives stands with the State of Israel and its right to self-defense and against the barbarity perpetrated by Hezbollah, Hamas and other terrorist groups, and the rogue regimes that sponsor them.

This resolution demands that Hamas and Hezbollah immediately and unconditionally release Mr. Shalit, Mr. Goldwasser and Mr. Regev, and that they provide all three with access to medical attention.

The resolution also holds Iran and Syria accountable for making terrorist acts like these possible. We cannot afford to be complacent about those Islamist extremists who would seek to kill three people, violate borders with impunity and threaten the security of the Middle East and the world.

As Dr. Martin Luther King noted, "Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere."

I thank Chairman ACKERMAN for introducing this resolution, his leadership in this area, and doing so much to advance the cause of the kidnapped Israeli soldiers. This resolution is about seeking what is needed most: Justice for the innocent and accountability for the guilty. I strongly urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, we have no further speakers. If the gentleman will yield back his time, we are prepared to do so.

Mr. BOOZMAN. Yes. Again, I reiterate how important to my colleagues it is that we pass this resolution and support it wholeheartedly, and I thank the gentleman for his leadership in this area.

Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman from Arkansas for his leadership and helping shepherd this on the floor today.

Mr. ISSA. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 107, which calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah.

On July 19, 2006, I and the three Members of Lebanese ancestry joined together to introduce H. Res. 926 in response to the unprovoked attack and kidnapping by Hezbollah. This resolution condemned Hamas and Hezbollah for engaging in the reprehensible terrorist act of taking hostages, affirmed Israel's right to conduct operations to secure the release of hostages, and urging the protection of innocent life and civilian infrastructure.

H. Res. 107 sends an important message that the terrorist leaders of Hamas and Hezbollah must recognize. The United States has not forgotten the kidnapped Israeli soldiers or those responsible for their kidnapping including the states who support the terrorist groups.

Mr. Speaker, I would like to note for the record that this resolution expresses "strong support and deep interest in achieving a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state living in peace alongside of the State of Israel," as well as "vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders."

While I fully support the commitment to the welfare and survival of the State of Israel, I have some reservations about this body expressing its support for a nation embracing a specific religious character. My concern is that in some situations, such expression of an endorsement of a particular religion or ethnicity could be used to exclude others which is, of course, not the intention of this resolution.

Both Israeli and Palestinian leaders have expressed their preference for a viable two-state solution and, as such, I support this joint goal and the independent peaceful aspirations of both peoples because the parties have made these decisions on their own and not because I support the preeminence of any particular religion.

Mr. PATRICK J. MURPHY of Pennsylvania. Mr. Speaker, I rise today in strong support of the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah. As a former soldier myself, my thoughts and prayers are with Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev and their families. Let them know that the strength and good wishes of this Congress and of our Nation are with them all.

I am proud to be a cosponsor of this resolution, which states in a clear, unequivocal voice that the United States stands with these brave soldiers and demands their immediate and unconditional release. The statement we make today is important not just for these three soldiers, but for the greater goal of achieving peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution makes it abundantly clear that neither the U.S., nor Israel, nor any of our allies will bow to the will of terrorist organizations. We will fight them at

every turn, we will never retreat, and we will prevail because the cause of freedom is just and righteous. As one of my heroes, President John F. Kennedy, once said, "Let every nation know, whether it wishes us well or ill, that we shall pay any price, bear any burden, meet any hardship, support any friend, oppose any foe, in order to assure the survival and the success of liberty." Today we renew this pledge.

This resolution also makes it clear that while we do not shrink from the fight against terrorism, we also recognize that this battle is one that cannot be won without diplomacy. While we declare that we will always support efforts to maintain Israel's identity as a Jewish state with secure borders, we also renew our commitment to achieving a resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through the creation of a viable and independent Palestinian state living in peace alongside of the State of Israel.

In conclusion, Mr. Speaker, we are here to speak in a united voice to support Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev. We pray for their safety and we hope that they will return home soon. As we do this, we realize that the stories of these three brave soldiers are a part of a larger conflict that has taken thousands of lives and has ravaged an entire region of the world for far too long. With this resolution, we take another small step toward a future that is free of this conflict, where both Israelis and Palestinians have a place to call home and where no more lives are lost to a needless cycle of violence.

Mr. BACA. Mr. Speaker, I ask for unanimous consent to revise and extend my remarks.

I rise today to voice my strong support for H. Res. 107. This bipartisan resolution calls for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah.

I want to thank my friend from New York, Congressman GARY ACKERMAN, for introducing this resolution.

More than 7 months have passed since July of 2006, when Hamas terrorists crossed into Israel to attack a military post, killing two soldiers and wounding and kidnapping a third, Gilad Shalit.

Less than 1 month later, Hezbollah terrorists crossed into Israel and ambushed Israeli troops patrolling the border with Lebanon, killing three soldiers and kidnapping two, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev.

These despicable acts occurred despite Israel's good faith efforts, which included its total withdrawal from southern Lebanon in May of 2000.

These two terrorist groups have withheld all information on the health and welfare of the men they have kidnapped. Defying the most basic standards of conduct, they have prevented medical personnel and members of the International Red Cross from having access to the kidnapped Israelis.

In spite of these terrorist attacks, the strength of the Israeli people has not wavered. In these difficult times, our support of Israel must not waver either.

The United States must stay committed to the welfare and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic nation with secure borders.

Our Congress must stand in one voice and condemn Hamas and Hezbollah, and their primary sponsors, Iran and Syria, for these cross border attacks.

I ask my colleagues to join me in supporting Israel and condemning these heinous acts, and cast a vote in favor of H. Res. 107.

Mr. GARRETT of New Jersey. Mr. Speaker, it's been more than seven months now and many have forgotten about the three Israeli soldiers kidnapped by Hamas and Hezbollah: Ehud Goldwasser, Eldad Regev, and Gilad Shalit. Hezbollah seems to have forgotten that last year's hostilities ended only after there were promises regarding the return of the Israeli men. This just goes to reinforce the fact that terrorist organizations cannot be negotiated with.

In 2004, United Nations Security Council Resolution 1559 called for Hezbollah in Lebanon to disband. Despite a half-dozen statements from the Secretary-General, they continued to occupy the border region as UN observers looked on. We don't know for sure, but these very observers may have watched Hezbollah cross the border and kidnap Goldwasser and Regev.

Security Council Resolution 170, which ended the most recent conflict, again called for Hezbollah to disarm and return of the soldiers. They remain in Lebanon and Gaza and not even international organizations such as the Red Cross have been able to see them and be assured of their fair treatment.

Israel has demonstrated its commitment to the Resolution by ceasing hostilities and pulling back its soldiers, but yet again they are dealing with opponents who show disrespect to all and whose word cannot be trusted.

We stand together with Israel to call again for the unconditional release of these three men. We pray for their safe return and for peace between Israel and its neighbors. They will not be forgotten by their families, by their nation, or by this body.

Mr. SHAYS. Mr. Speaker, I strongly support H. Res. 107, a resolution calling for the immediate and unconditional release of Israeli soldiers Gilad Shalit, Ehud Goldwasser and Eldad Regev, who continue to be held by the terror organizations Hamas and Hezbollah more than 6 months after being captured. These soldiers were kidnapped on Israeli soil in two separate, but equally brazen attacks, which were acts of war.

During their time in captivity, Hamas and Hezbollah, both of whom desire to simultaneously maintain an armed wing and a political wing, have not reported on the soldiers' health and have not granted access to international organizations to check on their well-being.

In August of last year, shortly after the fighting between Israeli forces and Hezbollah stopped, I visited Lebanon and northern Israel. While in Israel, we met with the families of the kidnapped soldiers. I cannot tell you how difficult it is, especially for a parent, to know a loved one is in harm's way and there is nothing you can do to help him.

It is so important that this resolution is on the floor of the House today because we want the soldiers to know, we want their families to know, and we want Hamas and Hezbollah and the state sponsors of their terrorist activities—Iran and Syria to know that America has not forgotten the kidnappings that took place last summer. We will not forget this injustice until the soldiers are returned home to their families safe and sound.

Mr. HASTINGS of Florida. Mr. Speaker I rise today as a proud original cosponsor of

House Resolution 107, calling for the immediate and unconditional release of the Israeli soldiers held captive by Hamas and Hezbollah since last summer.

The critical bipartisan legislation being introduced today calls for the immediate and unconditional release of the three Israeli soldiers who were captured last summer. Ehud Goldwasser, 31, and Eldad Regev, 26, were kidnapped by Hezbollah on July 12, 2006. Gilad Shalit was kidnapped by Hamas on June 25, 2006.

Moreover, my cosponsorship of this legislation follows up on the July 29, 2006 letter I wrote to American Red Cross Interim President Jack McGuire urging the American Red Cross to apply pressure to the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) to look into the well-being of the three Israeli soldiers. My colleague, Canadian Senator Jerry S. Grafstein, wrote a similar letter.

To date, Gilad is the only captive Israeli soldier to have been confirmed to be alive by his captors. Hezbollah has not given any indication as to whether the other two Israeli soldiers they captured are injured or even still alive. Contrary to the most basic standards of humanitarian conduct, Hamas and Hezbollah have prevented access to all of the Israeli captives by representatives of the International Committee of the Red Cross.

I and all in this country, resent terrorist groups who use human life as a strategic tool to further their radical agenda. In calling for the release of these Israeli prisoners, the United States stands with Israel and sends a united message to terrorists that their fanatic behavior will be unsuccessful in deterring a Middle East peace.

I support the efforts the Israeli government has thus far made in attempting to gain the captives' release. Foreign Minister Tzipi Livni and her fellow ministers, as well as Prime Minister Ehud Olmert, have continued to raise this issue at the highest levels in their diplomatic meetings.

These three brave soldiers have been held hostage without medical attention and without communication or access to their family for far too long. The United States Congress has not forgotten these men and will make every effort to secure their freedom. The Shalit, Goldwasser and Regev families should know that I and the United States stand by them and pray for the return of their sons.

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from New York (Mr. ACKERMAN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 107, as amended.

The question was taken; and (two-thirds being in the affirmative) the rules were suspended and the resolution, as amended, was agreed to.

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

EXPRESSING SENSE OF THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES THAT BANGLADESH SHOULD DROP CHARGES AGAINST SALAH UDDIN SHOAIB CHOUDHURY

Mr. ACKERMAN. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to