

to withdraw troops from Afghanistan, Congress created a Special Immigrant Visa program open to foreign nationals who served in critical roles and supported the American war effort. To date, more than 9,000 Afghans have benefited from the Special Immigrant Visa program. I am pleased to hear that the State Department has accelerated the processing time for these special visas in recent months, especially since there are over 6,000 still in the pipeline. However, as a result of this progress, the State Department is quickly running out of visas previously authorized by Congress.

The bill before us today will authorize 1,000 visas for the remainder of 2014 so that the State Department can continue processing applications for Afghan men and women who assumed enormous risks to aid our troops. Most importantly, this bill sends a message that the United States is a loyal partner, that we keep our word and we honor our promises, that we stand with those who stand with us in an ongoing fight for a fairer, freer world.

I urge my colleagues to support this bill.

Ms. LOFGREN. Mr. Speaker, I have no additional speakers.

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Illinois (Mr. KINZINGER), and then I am prepared to close.

□ 1430

Mr. KINZINGER of Illinois. Mr. Speaker, I thank the gentleman for yielding again.

I won't take much time, except to say it is very inspiring—as I think it is important to note when it happens—to see both sides of the aisle talking about such a very important issue.

I think it is important to note that when we exit the shores of the United States, Americans stand together with those that stood with us.

This is going to be a very important message to our current allies, and, again, something that is important to understand, as we all know, as history repeats itself, that at some point into the future, and we hope it is far out into the future, America will find itself engaged in something similar again where we need the indigenous population to help us to give them freedom and to defeat evil terrorism, or whatever it may be at the time. This is a message that we are sending to future conflicts that we will stand with you.

This is also going to, Mr. Speaker, save the lives of American soldiers, marines, airmen, and sailors in the future, as they have somebody that can help them to communicate with the local population and win the trust.

Again, for everybody involved, I want to just once again say thank you.

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

I will just thank all of the people who worked so hard on this, certainly on both sides of the aisle, and, most especially, Mr. BLUMENAUER, who has just

been ceaseless in his efforts to make sure that these translators were not left behind and not forgotten.

A note on the future: I am happy to support this bill for 1,000 visas today. However, it is reported that there are 5,000 translators backlogged. Now, we don't know, in that 5,000, some may have been murdered already, some may have given up, or some may have gone elsewhere. We don't know that we are going to need an additional number of visas, but we need to open our hearts in the same spirit of bipartisanship that if we fall short, we are going to have to come together as a country. Because we all know, not only is this the right thing to do morally, but for our troops in the field it is essential.

People have to know in other countries that if they step forward to assist the United States, the United States will honor its promises to them.

That is why this bill is so important, not only for what it does, but what it stands for, and why I urge its adoption.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

Mr. HOLDING. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

In closing, this is an important piece of bipartisan legislation. The Afghans, who benefit by this legislation, put their lives on the line for the United States of America. We owe them a debt of gratitude.

I look forward in the coming Congress to doing oversight to look at the further backlog of Afghans who may be eligible for visas, and look through oversight how this program is being administered and ensure that we are able to fulfill the promises that we have made to Afghans who have helped us in the field.

I encourage my colleagues to vote for this important piece of legislation.

With that, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentleman from North Carolina (Mr. HOLDING) that the House suspend the rules and pass the bill, H.R. 5195, as amended.

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

DENOUNCING USE OF CIVILIANS AS HUMAN SHIELDS BY HAMAS AND OTHER TERRORIST ORGANIZATIONS

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the concurrent resolution (H. Con. Res. 107) denouncing the use of civilians as human shields by Hamas and other terrorist organizations in violation of international humanitarian law, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the concurrent resolution.

The text of the concurrent resolution is as follows:

H. CON. RES. 107

Whereas the term "human shields" refers to the use of civilians, prisoners of war, or other noncombatants whose mere presence is designed to protect combatants and objects from attack;

Whereas the use of human shields violates international humanitarian law (also referred to as the Law of War or Law of Armed Conflict);

Whereas Additional Protocol I, Article 50(1) to the Geneva Convention defines "civilian" as, "[a]ny person who does not belong to one of the categories of persons referred to in Article 4(A) (1), (2), (3), and (6) of the Third Convention and in Article 43 of this Protocol. In the case of doubt whether a person is a civilian, that person shall be considered a civilian.";

Whereas Additional Protocol I, Article 51(7) to the Geneva Convention states, "[T]he presence or movement of the civilian population or individual civilians shall not be used to render certain points or areas immune from military operations, in particular in attempts to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield, favour or impede military operations. The Parties to the conflict shall not direct the movement of the civilian population or individual civilians in order to attempt to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield military operations.";

Whereas since June 15, 2014, there have been over 2,000 rockets fired by Hamas and other terrorist organizations from Gaza into Israel;

Whereas Hamas has been using civilian populations as human shields by placing their missile batteries in densely populated areas and near schools, hospitals, and mosques;

Whereas Israel drops leaflets, makes announcements, places phone calls and sends text messages to the Palestinian people in Gaza warning them in advance that an attack is imminent, and goes to extraordinary lengths to target only terrorist actors;

Whereas Hamas has urged the residents of Gaza to ignore the Israeli warnings and to remain in their houses and has encouraged Palestinians to gather on the roofs of their homes to act as human shields;

Whereas on July 23, 2014, the 46-Member UN Human Rights Council passed a resolution to form a commission of inquiry over Israel's operations in Gaza without a single mention of the indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas or the use of human shields, with the United States being the lone dissenting vote;

Whereas public reports have cited the role of Iran and Syria in providing material support and training to Hamas and other terrorist groups carrying out rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza;

Whereas throughout the summer of 2006 conflict between the State of Israel and the terrorist organization Hezbollah, Hezbollah forces utilized human shields in violation of international humanitarian law;

Whereas Al-Qaeda, Al-Shabaab, Islamic State of Iraq and the Levant (ISIL) and other foreign terrorist organizations typically use innocent civilians as human shields;

Whereas the United States and Israel have cooperated on missile defense projects, including Iron Dome, David's Sling, and the Arrow Anti-Missile System, projects designed to thwart a diverse range of threats, including short-range missiles and rockets fired by non-state actors, such as Hamas;

Whereas the United States has provided \$235,000,000 in fiscal year 2014 for Iron Dome research, development, and production;

Whereas, during the most recent rocket attacks from Gaza, Iron Dome has successfully

intercepted dozens of rockets that were launched against Israeli population centers; and

Whereas 5 million Israelis are currently living under the threat of rocket attacks from Gaza; Now, therefore, be it

Resolved by the House of Representatives (the Senate concurring), That Congress—

(1) strongly condemns the use of innocent civilians as human shields;

(2) calls on the international community to recognize and condemn Hamas' breaches of international law through the use of human shields;

(3) places responsibility for the rocket attacks against Israel on Hamas and other terrorist organizations, such as Islamic Jihad;

(4) supports the sovereign right of the Government of Israel to defend its territory and its citizens from Hamas' rocket attacks, kidnapping attempts and the use of tunnels and other means to carry out attacks against Israel;

(5) expresses condolences to the families of the innocent victims on both sides of the conflict;

(6) supports Palestinian civilians who reject Hamas and all forms of terrorism and violence, desiring to live in peace with their Israeli neighbors;

(7) condemns Hamas' repeated refusals to accept a cease-fire with Israel;

(8) supports efforts to permanently demilitarize the Gaza Strip, removing Hamas's means to target Israel, including its use of tunnels, rockets, and other means; and

(9) condemns the United Nations Human Rights Council's biased commission of inquiry into Israel's Gaza operations.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from California (Mr. ROYCE) and the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from California.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, 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 concurrent resolution.

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

There was no objection.

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

Let me begin by expressing my appreciation to the chairman and ranking member of the Middle East Subcommittee, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN of Florida, and Mr. DEUTCH of Florida for their good work on this legislation. I am pleased to have worked with Mr. ENGEL and the leadership to ensure that this legislation was scheduled for the floor today for consideration.

Mr. Speaker, this legislation places responsibility for the escalation and violence squarely where it belongs: with the Iranian-backed terrorist group Hamas. Hamas is deliberately targeting Israeli civilians through the use not only of rockets but longer and longer range missiles—2,500 of these so far—aimed at cities—Tel Aviv and Jerusalem, attempting to attack Israeli communities. Remember, these attacks are at civilian populations, they are not at military installations. And

Hamas is perpetuating the kidnapping and murder, which started with three Israeli teenagers.

Again and again, we have seen these incursions through these tunnels—32 new tunnels found so far—3 miles into Israeli territory. One of the amazing things, when you go into the tunnels, you see not only how they are used for these attacks, but what they have in reserve in these tunnels: ropes, syringes, tranquilizers, handcuffs, explosives, walls and walls of explosives. These were attempts to inflict mass casualty attacks on the civilian population.

\$100 million is approximately what was spent on these tunnels, at the expense, I might add, of the Palestinian people. That is 4,000 trucks of equipment coming in over the border from Israel with cement—which was presumed to be used, hopefully, for schools or hospitals—with cement, with aggregate, with steel, instead used for the construction of these tunnels tunneling under Israel.

Less than 10 years ago, Israel pulled out of Gaza. The Strip was going to flourish without Israel's control. That was what we were told. But it wasn't supposed to be this way. It wasn't supposed to be a situation where Hamas would take resources and plow it into terror day by day.

Today, the Gaza Strip is a terrorist sanctuary on Israel's borders with sanctuaries within this sanctuary. We now know 32 of these are tunnels.

Beyond targeting Israeli civilians with kidnapping and indiscriminate firing of rockets, Hamas shows a callous disregard for the lives of the Palestinians it ostensibly represents. That is the purpose of this initiative here today, to call attention to that fact.

Earlier this month, the Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri appeared on Al-Aqsa television and encouraged Gaza residents to act as human shields. That is the responsibility they ask as they are hidden down in these tunnels. As they are in these bunkers, they ask their civilian population to go and make of themselves human shields in front of rocket launchers.

The world can't let terrorists embed their forces among the civilian population, using them as human shields, without speaking out. This is a direct violation of international humanitarian law and the law of war, sacrificing the innocent in an effort to protect those engaged in terror from an Israeli response.

Hamas is engaging in a crime of enormous proportions, perpetrated by those who are deliberately hiding among civilians to protect themselves. According to the Geneva Convention, the presence of the civilian population, or individual civilians, shall not be used to render certain points or areas immune from military operations, in particular, in attempts to shield military objectives from attack, or to shield, favor, or impede military operations. That is the Geneva Convention.

A full court press to discredit Israel is on in the United Nations. My question is: Where are the defenders of international law in condemning Hamas' use of human shields? I saw the report. There is no mention in there of the rockets being fired against Israel.

Yes, this is a case where Israel is using missile defense to protect its civilians, and Hamas is using their civilians to protect their missiles. It is a case where we have to recognize Israel's right to defend its people by taking necessary and appropriate force to neutralize the threat posed by Hamas.

Think about the recent discovery that Israeli security sources unearthed, evidence that Hamas was preparing to dispatch 200 terrorists via ten tunnels toward six Israeli communities with a goal of killing and kidnapping scores and scores of Israelis on the Jewish New Year. If that was on our border with Canada, how would we react?

I urge all of my colleagues to support this resolution, which takes a strong stand against Hamas' crimes, and I reserve the balance of my time.

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

I rise in strong support of H. Con. Res. 107, condemning Hamas' use of human shields in Gaza.

Mr. Speaker, in recent weeks, on our TV screens and computer monitors, in the pages of newspapers and magazines, we have seen the bloody and brutal results of war. We have heard the reports of so many lives lost. No matter where you come from or what you believe, if you don't grieve over every innocent killed, you simply don't have a heart.

What is missing from many of these stories, though, is why these blameless men, women, and children ended up in harm's way. When Israel acts to defend itself, it does everything it can do to warn civilians and minimize loss of life. Israel warns Palestinians ahead of time, going so far as to say specifically where an airstrike is going to occur.

What does Hamas do, on the other hand? It forces Palestinians to stay in their homes, to stay in the line of fire. All the while, Hamas leaders cower in their underground tunnels. Then they have the cynicism to point their cameras at the dead, show the world the outcome of their human shield strategy, and blame Israel. It is despicable and it is shameful.

This resolution sends a clear message. The Palestinian people of Gaza should not have to take this anymore from Hamas.

It also makes clear that we support taking away Hamas' ability to wage terror campaigns.

As Secretary Kerry said on Tuesday:

Any process to resolve the crisis in Gaza in a lasting and meaningful way must lead to the disarmament of Hamas and all terrorist groups.

Now is the time for the United States to stand firm in our support of Israel. Hamas has Qatar and Turkey, shamefully, to support them, and the rest of

the world has turned a deaf ear to Israel's pleas for security.

The U.N. Human Rights Council, which, frankly, is a joke, even voted to investigate Israel for war crimes, with the United States casting the courageous lone dissenting vote. We know the Human Rights Council typically has a muddled view of Israeli-Palestinian issues. But given the constant barrage of Hamas rockets, launched from civilian population centers, day in and day out, week in and week out, year in and year out, and falling on Israeli civilian population centers, the Council seems especially out of touch.

We ought to mention something that is very important. This war started because Hamas keeps attacking the Israeli civilian population through the years with its missiles—civilians. So for Hamas to now fret over civilian casualties, which is the fault of them in both Gaza and Israel, really just rings hollow.

□ 1445

If Hamas were so concerned about human casualties, why does it target Israeli civilian populations, as it has all these years?

As Israel's security is threatened and its reputation is smeared—frankly, the media hasn't been helpful or even-handed—this moral equivalency between a terrorist group and a democratic country trying to protect its citizens is sometimes sickening.

The United States is the only one true friend that Israel has. We must always stand up for Israel's security, and we must state plainly that Israel is not alone.

I want to thank Representative ROS-LEHTINEN and Representative DEUTCH for their leadership on this issue. They have done very strong work in bringing to light Hamas' deplorable crimes against the Israeli and Palestinian people. I also want to thank Representative STEVE ISRAEL and Representative TOM COLE for sponsoring a similar resolution, which the House passed just a few weeks ago.

I also want to thank Chairman ROYCE, who has worked diligently and hard to bring consensus to our committee, so we can speak with one voice to let the Israeli people know that when it comes to the support of Israel, support is strong and bipartisan from this Congress, and that is the way it should be.

So only when the world rejects Hamas and its tactics and when Hamas can no longer rain terrorist rockets on Israel and send the Palestinian to their deaths will peace between Israelis and Palestinians be possible.

Mr. Speaker, I urge my colleagues to support this resolution, and I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 5 minutes to the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN), chair of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and author of this measure.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I thank my good friend, the chairman of our committee, ED ROYCE of California, as well as the ranking member, ELIOT ENGEL, for their continued efforts in support of human rights and Israel's right to defend herself.

Mr. Speaker, this resolution condemning Hamas' use of human shields in violation of international humanitarian law is an extremely important and timely measure, given the current situation in Israel and Gaza.

I want to first thank my colleague from South Florida, TED DEUTCH, for joining me in introducing this legislation. It was at an official factfinding mission trip that we took to the Middle East earlier this month where Ted and I realized how important this measure was needed.

While we were there, Hamas had already begun to increase the frequency of indiscriminate rocket attacks against Israel. Prime Minister Netanyahu was compelled to respond, but made it clear from the very beginning that the objective was to restore peace and security to the people of Israel and that quiet would be met with quiet, but Hamas would not relent and only increased its attacks.

While Hamas was firing rockets at innocent Israeli civilians, Israel was taking every step imaginable to avoid Palestinian civilian casualties. Hamas' response was to intentionally place the Palestinians in harm's way.

It stores its rockets and weapons underneath the homes of Palestinians and even in at least three schools run by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency, and it uses Palestinian men, women, and children as human shields, in violation of international humanitarian law, by placing its missile batteries in densely-populated areas and near schools, hospitals, and mosques.

Mr. Speaker, the contrast between Israel—a legitimate sovereign state—and Hamas—a terrorist organization—could not be any clearer. Israel values and goes to great lengths to protect human life, while Hamas has no respect for human life and goes to great lengths to sacrifice anyone, including the Palestinian people, in the name of its war against Israel.

Israel has accepted repeated ceasefire offers. Hamas has rejected them all. While Israel seeks to fight terrorism, Hamas is an internationally recognized terror organization that is being supported by countries like Qatar in its war against our true democratic ally, Israel, yet it is Israel that wrongfully faces international condemnation for exercising her right to protect her citizens and defend herself and gets singled out when the world should be condemning Hamas.

Last week, Mr. Speaker, the U.N. Human Rights Council, an institution that has been leading the anti-Israel charge for years now and has since lost any legitimacy that it might have had, passed a resolution to investigate what it calls war crimes and human rights violations by Israel, not Hamas.

There was not even a word about Hamas' attacks against innocent Israeli civilians, nor Hamas' use of Palestinians as human shields. Of the 47 members on the Human Rights Council, you would think that there would be many voices of reason—or some voices of reason—to speak out against this obvious anti-Israel bias, but the United States was the lone voice of dissent against this anti-Israel resolution.

Our so-called European allies lacked the courage of their convictions, and they couldn't even muster the resolve to vote for or against the resolution. Instead, they abstained. This is a disgrace, and it is a shame.

If the United Nations Human Rights Council will not act and use its voice, that is why it is so important for the U.S. House of Representatives to pass this resolution and not only stand up for the Palestinian people who have been made pawns in Hamas' mission to destroy Israel, to their detriment, but for Israel in the face of this biased anti-Israel agenda.

We must be the counterbalance, Mr. Speaker. We must send a message to the world that we will continue to stand alongside Israel and that we will condemn Hamas and its use of human shields. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution to stand up for our ally, Israel, and to stand up for human rights and American ideals and principles.

I thank the chairman, Mr. ROYCE, and the ranking member, Mr. ENGEL, as well as my South Florida colleague, Mr. DEUTCH, for their help.

Mr. ENGEL. Mr. Speaker, I yield 3 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. DEUTCH), my good friend and colleague, the ranking member of the Middle East Subcommittee and co-author of this resolution.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank Chairman ROYCE and Ranking Member ENGEL and especially Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN for her partnership in this effort to call the world's attention to Hamas' use of innocent civilians as human shields. I also thank Casey Kustin of my staff, Eddy Acevedo of Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN's staff, and the committee staff as well, for bringing this important resolution to the floor.

Chairman ROS-LEHTINEN and I were in Israel the night that the world learned the tragic fate of the three Israeli teens: Eyal, Gilad, and Naftali. We mourned with the families and tens of thousands of others at their joint funeral, and we were there just days later when 16-year-old Mohammed Abu Khdeir was brutally and tragically murdered.

In the wake of these heartbreaking deaths, violence escalated when Hamas began indiscriminately launching rockets at Israel, with the sole purpose of causing terror and death. Israel responded.

Every civilian death is tragic. We continue to mourn the loss of innocent lives on both sides of this conflict, but we cannot forget how this started, and we cannot forget who is responsible.

It is Hamas that has chosen to launch 2,600 rockets at civilians. It is Hamas that hides rockets and rocket launchers in UNRA schools, in mosques, and even in hospitals, using the Palestinian people as cover for their weapon stockpiles and their rocket launchers.

It is Hamas that chose to spend millions of dollars digging tunnels into Israel to launch terrorist attacks and fortifying underground bunkers for its terror commanders, instead of investing, so that the people of Gaza have a chance at a prosperous future.

It is Hamas that is responsible for the miserable condition of the Palestinians in Gaza, even before this military engagement started.

As former President Clinton said last week:

Hamas was perfectly well aware of what would happen if they started raining rockets in Israel. They fired a thousand of them, and they have a strategy designed to force Israel to kill their own civilians, so that the rest of the world will condemn them.

Mr. Speaker, while Israel warns the residents of Gaza of incoming attacks via text messages, phone calls, and leaflets, Hamas' spokesmen go on television to urge people to stay in their homes to act as human shields. This is a direct violation of the Geneva Convention. Let me be clear: the use of civilians as shields to protect military objectives is a violation of international law.

It is time for responsible nations to condemn this abhorrent behavior and condemn the use of innocent civilians as human shields.

Passing House Concurrent Resolution 107 won't stop Hamas from putting the lives of its citizens at risk as human shields, but it will make clear that the U.S. House condemns the terrorists who wants to destroy and murder Israelis—the terrorists who violate international law by using human shields.

I ask my colleagues to please support this resolution.

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

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

It has been said many times, but I think we should say it again: Israel uses its missiles to protect its citizens, and Hamas uses its citizens to protect its missiles. That says it all. That is just a disgrace, and it is a fact.

The United States must back Israel in its quest for security. Any cease-fire that is put forth must contain the total disarming of Hamas and the total destruction of those death tunnels that Hamas has been building to try to kill Israeli civilians. That concrete was allowed to be trucked in, under the eyes of Israel, because they were told that the concrete would be used to build schools and infrastructure. Instead, the concrete was used to build tunnels to kill Israelis. This really cannot be tolerated at all.

I would also say again that the media reporting of what is really going on in

Gaza has been less than stellar. There are atrocities in Syria, but that seems to be yesterday's story. So while every death in Gaza and in Israel is something over which we grieve, there are more deaths in Syria every single day in that bloody civil war than there have been in Gaza, yet you hear no mention of it on the news. All you do is have cameras focused on Gaza.

War is hell. Nobody wants war, but a terrorist organization like Hamas must be told that terrorism cannot prevail.

Israel's fight is not with the Palestinian people. It is with Hamas, a terrorist organization that denies Israel's very right to exist and that wants to kill as many Israelis and Jews around the world and destroy the State of Israel. That is why the United States and the European Union have designated Hamas as a terrorist organization.

We need to put that in perspective. A terrorist organization that uses its own people as human shields is not to ever be taken seriously, nor has it the right to lecture anybody about the sanctity of human life.

In closing, let me say again that Israel has the right to self-defense. Hamas' use of human shields demonstrates just how much they devalue human life. The Palestinian people deserve better than Hamas. The Israeli people deserve better.

I want to again thank my friend, Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN, and Mr. DEUTCH, for their hard work on this issue. I want to thank my friend, Chairman ROYCE, for his leadership on so many issues, but on this issue as well.

Democrats and Republicans agree that we stand by our ally, Israel, and we condemn the terrorist organization Hamas, which uses its own people as human shields.

I yield back the balance of my time.

□ 1500

Mr. ROYCE. Mr. Speaker, I yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from Florida (Mr. YOH). He is a member of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. YOH. Mr. Chairman, I appreciate it.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Con. Res. 107.

This resolution denounces the cowardly act of using civilians—women and children—as human shields by Hamas and any other terrorist organization, which is in violation of international humanitarian law.

As a member of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa, I was proud to have worked with Congresswoman ROS-LEHTINEN, Chairman ROYCE, and Ranking Member ENGEL. It is my hope that this resolution sends a very clear message to Hamas that their abhorrent practice of using civilians as human shields must stop.

Hamas has continued to fire rockets indiscriminately into Israel from residential areas within Gaza, as well as having continued to store munitions near schools and hospitals.

Mr. Speaker, what kind of human does this kind of thing? It is a coward. It is a person who does not value human life.

Since June of 2014, over 2,000 rockets have been fired at Israel. In response to the repeated rocket attacks, the United States and Israel have worked together on missile defense projects, such as the Iron Dome. The Iron Dome is an effective missile defense system. It has proven its worth time after time, intercepting dozens of Hamas rockets bound for densely-populated areas within Israel.

This resolution must pass in order to assure our Israeli allies of our commitment to them, as well as to send a very clear message to Hamas that their use of human shields must stop.

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

I was in Haifa, Israel, in August of 2006 during the second Lebanon war, during the war between Hezbollah and Israel. While I was there, I was in Haifa. Rockets were raining down. For 30 days, rockets rained down on that city. Air sirens were blaring during the day. It looked like a ghost town. It was very debilitating, as you can imagine.

What amazed me was the targeting of the civilian areas of that town and the targeting of the hospitals—the deliberate targeting of civilians. That was the goal. At one point, we had to go into a bunker when rockets were fired close to where we were.

The one takeaway I had was that out of that came the Iron Dome. In a few short years, that system, the Iron Dome, which they were working on, went from the drawing board to deployment and battle, proving its mettle, and it proved its ability to shield Israelis in the south from the Hamas rocket threat more recently. Congress, I think, can be proud of our role here in backing the Iron Dome, which is recognized as part of this resolution.

There is another part of this resolution, Mr. Speaker. I have to tell you that Israel has more than the right to defend itself; it has the duty to protect its citizens. I saw what happened in Haifa—over 600 people in that one trauma hospital I was in.

It is exercising that responsibility right now to protect its people because, time and again, day after day, these rockets continue to be fired from these rocket launchers in Hamas-held territory.

No country would stand for the Hamas terror organization's rockets and tunnels. Remember, these tunnels come 3 miles into the border, 3 miles under Israel—one of them right outside an Israeli kindergarten. That is Hamas.

Of course, Hamas' whole reason for being, for any of you who have read its charter, is to attack Israel and to attack Jews. This nihilistic terrorist organization works to kill the maximum number of Israeli innocents while using its own population as human shields. Yes, that is a double war crime.

Since the last conflict, Hamas has improved on all aspects of its operation, courtesy of Iran. In the same

way Iran supplied Hezbollah, Iran supplies Hamas, and this could not have been done without the longer-range missiles—the M-302s—that Iran has now transferred into the inventory of Hamas, so that Jerusalem and Tel Aviv can be targets.

Earlier this month, my committee held a hearing that exposed Iran as the primary backer of Hamas through weapons, through funding, through material support to Hamas from Iran if that government—if the Ayatollah regime—is granted further sanctions relief as part of nuclear negotiations.

I ask all Members to join me in condemning Hamas on its despicable use of human shields and to continue to stand with Israel to face down the many shared threats that we face.

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

Ms. MOORE. Mr. Speaker, I rise with a heavy heart as death and violence once again rips the Middle East. Innocent civilians find themselves again hostage in a war that none of them sought. The rockets continue to rain down in Israel and civilians in Gaza find it harder and harder to find refuge. And there is no end in sight despite the ongoing work of peacemakers.

The most pressing need at the moment is an immediate ceasefire that ends the rocket fire, allows humanitarian aid to reach those in need, and lays the foundation for efforts to address Israel's long term security needs. I am disappointed by the absence of any language in this resolution supporting international efforts to bring about an immediate ceasefire. Additionally, no one has come forward today to argue how this legislation brings us any closer to a peaceful resolution in the region or an end to the violence, terror, and fear being experienced in Israel and Gaza.

Over 1,000 Palestinians have been killed so far, many, but not all of them civilians. Over 50 Israelis, including 3 civilians and two Israeli-American soldiers, have been killed so far. The key concern for me is the qualifier—so far. A key question at this volatile moment is how to end the violence. This resolution is absolutely silent on that point.

I strongly believe that we need to work for an immediate ceasefire to prevent further death and destruction in both Israel and Gaza. I commend the U.S. for continuing to seek an immediate ceasefire which I fully support. Despite the gallant attempts of the Secretary of State and the U.N. Secretary General Ban Ki Moon and others, an agreement remains elusive and the violence continues.

The resolution rightly condemns Hamas, a terrorist organization that has shown time and again its disregard for innocent human life. The only party that seems to benefit from further chaos and loss of life is Hamas, which continues to lob rockets at innocent Israelis. The barrage of rockets must stop. Hamas has no regard for the lives it puts in danger. Its despicable tactics have been thoroughly denounced by the international community including the U.N. Secretary General who recently noted that “the United Nations position is clear: We condemn strongly the rocket attacks. These must stop immediately. We condemn the use of civilians—schools, hospital and other civilian facilities—for military pur-

poses. No country would accept rockets raining down on its territory—and all countries and parties have an international obligation to protect civilians.”

The resolution recognizes, as President Obama has, that Israel has a right to defend itself from relentless rocket attacks. The current rocket count is well over 1,000 and growing every day. Israel does not need authorization from the U.S. House of Representatives to act to stop the rocket fire by Hamas.

I have been to Sderot. I talked with Israelis living in the shadows of the rockets, including one woman whose relative was killed by a rocket from Gaza in a previous conflict. And I remember her fervent desire to live at peace with her neighbors.

I would point out that the resolution rightly recognizes that innocent civilians on both sides have suffered. According to the U.N., nearly 10% of the population of Gaza are seeking shelter at U.N. facilities, some of which have been attacked. The U.S. has recently announced it would provide \$47 million to help meet immediate humanitarian needs in Gaza amid deteriorating conditions.

However, I remain concerned that this resolution does not press for an immediate ceasefire by all parties or urge or express support for efforts by the U.S. and international community to push for that peace. That is the best way to support innocent civilians on both sides—ending the violence that threatens them. You can't force peace on those who don't want it, but we must make every effort to offer a path out of misery and suffering and fear.

As President Obama has said, “Israel has a right to defend itself against rocket and tunnel attacks from Hamas.” He also stated, “I've also said, however, that we have serious concerns about the rising number of Palestinian civilian deaths and the loss of Israeli lives. And that is why it now has to be our focus and the focus of the international community to bring about a ceasefire that ends the fighting and that can stop the deaths of innocent civilians, both in Gaza and in Israel.”

As a Congress, we should join with the State Department, the U.N. Security Council, and others in urging all parties to redouble efforts to protect civilians, to find a way to end the violence and ensure peace and security for all, and to then move to find a long-term resolution that meets Israel's security needs and the rights of civilians to live in peace. This cycle of violence cannot continue indefinitely.

Innocent Israeli and Palestinian civilians cannot afford another three weeks of rocket fire and further bloodshed. We must continue to push for a ceasefire and to help find a long term solution that will allow Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace, side by side. What is needed now is de-escalation of violence and escalation of diplomatic efforts.

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

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

A motion to reconsider was laid on the table.

CONFERENCE REPORT ON H.R. 3230, PAY OUR GUARD AND RESERVE ACT

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the conference report on the bill (H.R. 3230) making continuing appropriations during a government shutdown to provide pay and allowances to members of the reserve components of the Armed Forces who perform inactive-duty training during such period.

The Clerk read the title of the bill. (For conference report and statement, see proceedings of the House of July 28, 2014, at page H6953.)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to the rule, the gentleman from Florida (Mr. MILLER) and the gentleman from Maine (Mr. MICHAUD) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentleman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days within which to revise and extend their remarks.

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

There was no objection.

Mr. MILLER of Florida. Mr. Speaker, I yield myself such time as I may consume.

I rise today in support of the conference report to accompany H.R. 3230, the Veterans' Access to Care through Choice, Accountability, and Transparency Act of 2014.

General Omar Bradley, the former administrator of what is now the Department of Veterans Affairs, once said of our work, “We are dealing with veterans, not procedures—with their problems, not ours.”

We have come face-to-face with the problems our veterans routinely encounter, and they are considerable to say the least. As every American now knows, congressional oversight and whistleblower revelations have exposed widespread corruption and systemic delays in access and failures of accountability across our Nation's second largest bureaucracy.

Thousands of veterans across this country have been left to wait—some for years; some in pain; and, most disturbingly, some in caskets that are draped with American flags; some while chronic or fatal conditions worsened until little hope was left—for the health care they earned through their honorable service to our Nation. Meanwhile, poor-performing VA leaders and employees continued to receive large bonuses, subject to little accountability for their many inadequacies.

There is no doubt, Mr. Speaker, that the Department of Veterans Affairs, as we know it today, is in crisis, and as a result, our veterans are suffering. The conference report we are considering this afternoon is the first step to alleviating their pain and for paving the