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## Senate

The Senate met at 3 p.m. and was called to order by the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a Senator from the State of Illinois.

### PRAYER

The Chaplain, Dr. Barry C. Black, offered the following prayer:

Let us pray.

Eternal Lord God, the author of peace, as wars and rumors of wars bombard us, we turn our eyes to You. In the past, You have brought order from chaos, light from darkness, truth from falsehood, peace from conflict, and hope from despair. Please, do it again.

Today, use our lawmakers as instruments of Your peace. May they strive to please You in all that they think, say, and do.

Lord, use us all as Your ambassadors of reconciliation. Let there be peace on Earth, and let it begin with each of us.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

### PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Presiding Officer led the Pledge of Allegiance, as follows:

I pledge allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all.

### APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will please read a communication to the Senate from the President pro tempore (Mrs. MURRAY).

The senior assistant executive clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,  
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,  
Washington, DC, October 16, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby appoint the Honorable TAMMY DUCKWORTH, a

Senator from the State of Illinois, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,  
President pro tempore.

Ms. DUCKWORTH thereupon assumed the Chair as Acting President pro tempore.

### RESERVATION OF LEADER TIME

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the leadership time is reserved.

### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

### EXECUTIVE SESSION

### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report:

The senior executive clerk read the nomination of Jennifer L. Hall, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the District of Delaware.

### RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The majority leader is recognized.

### ISRAEL

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, today I come before the Senate with a heart full of grief. I come shaken by anger and fear but with a resolve to act. I come with my spirit moved down to its core by the terrible things I saw these past few days.

This morning, I returned to the United States after leading a bipartisan delegation to Israel along with Senators ROSEN and KELLY and ROM-

NEY and CASSIDY. As the first Jewish majority leader, as the highest ranking Jewish elected official ever in America, I wanted to be there, and I felt an obligation to be there.

It was a trip I will remember for the rest of my life, a visit to the only Jewish State on Earth, facing one of the darkest hours of its 75-year history, probably the darkest hour.

We traveled to deliver a simple and unmistakable message: We, the American people, stand with the people of Israel in this moment of need. We said to the people of Israel: We have your back. We feel your pain. We ache with you. And in the coming weeks, the U.S. Senate will do everything possible to help Israel eliminate the threat that Hamas presents and help Israel in every way we can.

I thank my colleagues who joined me on this important trip. I thank everyone who will be traveling there this coming weekend. Right now, our presence means the world to Israel. They were so gratified that American Senators came to stand with them in their moments of grief and sorrow. It was clear that just being there made a tremendous difference and boosted their resolve.

We had very productive meetings with a whole range of Israeli leaders, including Prime Minister Netanyahu, National Unity Party Minister Chairman Benny Gantz, Defense Minister Gallant, President Isaac Herzog, Opposition Leader Yair Lapid.

But the most memorable meeting was with 12 families of the hostages. There they were sitting there, wondering what was happening to their mother, their sister, their brother, their baby in the hands of these brutal terrorists.

Nothing prepared us for the overwhelming grief we felt talking to the families of the hostages and sharing their deep pain. There was not a dry eye in the room. Many of these people didn't know if their relatives were dead

• This "bullet" symbol identifies statements or insertions which are not spoken by a Member of the Senate on the floor.



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or alive. Some of them said: I wonder which is better.

They just knew that they were missing and taken by wretched Hamas fighters. It breaks your heart.

We saw footage they showed us of their loved ones being led away by the Hamas terrorists, an elderly woman being dragged away from her family, a 12-year-old boy being pushed along by these terrorists—families in sheer agony, wondering what was happening to their loved ones in the captivity of these brutal terrorists.

Today, we now know that the number of hostages has exceeded 199. It is of the utmost importance that Israel and the United States do everything it can to bring every single one of these hostages to safety.

During our visit, we also experienced, in flashes, what the Israelis experience on a daily basis. We were having lunch at our hotel when the sirens went off, meaning rockets were only 7 to 9 minutes away, rockets fired by Hamas. We all rushed into a shelter and waited with bated breath until they told us the coast was clear. It happened again in the evening moments before a press conference that had to be delayed that we held on Sunday.

For us, the danger was momentary, thank God, but it is harrowing to think that Israelis are going through this and much greater horrors every single day.

So, again, as the first Jewish majority leader, the highest ranking Jewish official in America, someone who has knowledge of the persecutions and ravages that have affected the Jewish people through the decades, the centuries, the millennia, I felt an obligation to travel this weekend to Israel and deliver a message of partnership.

And I believe our trip went a significant way in pushing back against the dangerous false equivalency between what Hamas is doing and the response against them. Let us be clear: Hamas is an evil organization that wants to see Israel wiped off the face of the map. They don't believe in a two-state solution. They want no Israel and no Jews living between the Jordan and the Mediterranean. Eliminating Israel is part of their charter, so is the killing of Jews.

If left to their own devices, Hamas would do to the Jewish people in the rest of Israel what they did to them in the Gaza border.

So Israel can't just shrug its shoulders and say: Let's not try to end the threat from Hamas. They have an obligation to do it because Hamas's attack against Israel was an act of unspeakable evil. It was their goal to kill as many civilians as possible, children brutalized, the elderly slaughtered, young people in the prime of their life at a peace festival being machine-gunned down as they ran away.

I was told that at one of the kibbutzes, over a hundred people—people from 90 years old down to little toddlers—were rounded up and herded into the recreation room, and then Hamas

machine-gunned every one of them down until they were dead, every one of them.

It reminded me of the story of my own family, my great-grandmother who was the wife of a well-known rabbi. When the Nazis came into Ukraine—that was then part of Poland—in 1941, they told my grandmother to gather her family, her greater family, on her porch. She did. About 35 people, according to what my grandmother told me, her daughter, who had come to America, told me there were about 35 people from ages 88 to 3 months. The Nazis said: You are coming with us. She said: We are not moving. They machine-gunned every one of them down. History is repeating itself in an evil and awful way.

So the bottom line is simple: Hamas must be defeated. Israel must ensure they are permanently stopped because if the world moves on and acts as if this were just some unfortunate episode, you can be sure this will happen again. And it is essential that the entire world unite in condemning the evils of Hamas.

I first learned of the attacks against Israel during my delegation trip to China when I met with President Xi. I pointed out to President Xi that their initial statement on the conflagration in the Middle East didn't even mention terrorism or the deaths of these innocent civilians. I, respectfully, requested that he change his statement, and they did strengthen their initial statement relating to the attacks. The rest of the world must do the same. It must acknowledge and condemn the attacks—brutal attacks—that occurred this week.

Now, as the Senate gavels back in for our fall work period, supporting Israel must be at the top, at the front, at the center of our attention. To that end, I urge every single member of the Senate—Democrat, Republican, Independent—to unanimously support the resolution championed by Chairman CARDIN, Ranking Member RISCH, Leader MCCONNELL, and myself, condemning Hamas and affirming that we stand with Israel and their right to defend themselves. The resolution matters because the Senate needs to declare in one voice that we stand with Israel and against Hamas.

In the coming days, I will be working with the administration on putting together an emergency supplemental that will give Israel the tools it needs to defend itself. That means military assistance, intelligence assistance, diplomatic assistance, and humanitarian assistance to care for innocent civilians.

We want to move this package quickly. The Senate must go first. I know that the House is in disarray, but we cannot wait for them. The needs are too great. And if we pass a strong package with strong bipartisan support, it will importune the House, somehow or other, to act, despite the morass they are in.

It is also very important that we not only provide the military and intelligence support Israel needs but that we provide humanitarian assistance to aid civilians impacted by the violence.

During my meetings with Israeli officials, my colleagues and I strongly echoed the administration's urging that Israel follow the rule of law and do everything to minimize civilian deaths.

Israel has a very difficult task to eliminate Hamas, save the hostages but also minimize civilian casualties, which is a difficult task but one that Israel must and does strive to live up to.

We are not like the evil militants of Hamas. Israel is not. In America and in Israel, countries must hold themselves to a higher standard. It is part of who we are as democracies. So this package must move quickly, a package of military aid, the necessities that Israel needs. We talked to the leadership of Israel about what they need, and it will be in this package: intelligence aid to make sure we share intelligence in the best way possible, diplomatic aid to make sure that the nations of the world stand with Israel, and humanitarian aid to make sure that civilians are given the help that they need. We must move this package quickly.

We must also move to confirm an ambassador to Israel as quickly as possible. The President has already sent us a capable and strong nominee in Jack Lew, who will come before the Senate Foreign Relations Committee on Wednesday. I urge the committee to approve Mr. Lew as soon as possible, without any costly partisan delays so we can bring him to the floor and confirm him with all due haste.

We dealt very closely in our trip with so many people in the Embassy, including a wonderful charge d'affaires, but it is obvious that they really need an ambassador now more than ever. Mr. Lew has proven himself a strong public servant, a ferocious ally of Israel, so delaying him would be egregious at a time like this. We must move him quickly, and I hope we will.

Finally, as the conflict evolves in the coming days and weeks, my office will work with the administration to ensure the Senate remains fully updated about the situation at all times.

For the information of the Senate, we will hold an all-Senators classified briefing this Wednesday, October 18, at 3:30 p.m., provided by the Secretary of Defense, the Secretary of State, the Chairman of the Joint Chiefs, and the Director of National Intelligence. It is essential that we hear what is going on from our top leaders.

Madam President, the coming weeks will be an immense challenge, not just for the people of Israel, but for all of us in Congress as well. Now, more than ever, we must work with the spirit of bipartisanship to ensure we can govern and protect Americans here at home and abroad and stand with our friends in Israel. This moment is a test for all

of us—a test for our ability to work together, a test for our resolve to stand with our friends, a test of our resolve to fulfill our fundamental duties to the world. Let us not squander this consequential moment.

And to the people of Israel—“*eretz zavat chalav*,” a land of milk and honey—let me close with this: We will be by your side. We will not allow you to bear this burden alone. Your burden will be our burden; your grief is our grief; your cause is our cause. May the memories of the day be a blessing and a source of strength to all of us as we navigate the road ahead.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Madam President, since the Senate last convened, terrorists have sent shock waves through the civilized world with savage, cold-blooded violence.

On October 7, Hamas and Palestinian Islamic jihad desecrated Israel's soil and tore apart Israeli families with utterly medieval brutality. Like ISIS, terrorists from Gaza turned peaceful homes and neighborhoods in Israel into blood-soaked war zones. It was the deadliest attack on the Israelis and on American citizens overseas in decades.

But now, reports and images of these horrific scenes have spread widely. Accounts of Israeli women tortured and raped, of elders kidnapped, of charred corpses, beheadings, of children shot dead in their homes have shaken peaceful people to their cores. In one kibbutz, a paramedic named Amit was working to save the lives of victims pouring into a local clinic when she documented what would be the last moments of her own life in messages to her sister. Here is what she said: “They are here. I don’t think I will get out of here alive. Be strong if something happens to me.”

A few minutes later, in a call from Amit’s phone, all her sister could hear were gunshots and screams. One in 10 residents of the community were slaughtered by the terrorists.

Here is how one retired senior IDF commander put it after he ran to rejoin Israel’s defense efforts: “I’ve heard during my childhood about pogroms in Europe, the Holocaust, of course. All my family came from Europe. They are survivors, but I never thought I would see things like this.”

Madam President, the people of Israel are grieving unimaginable horrors, and we have a responsibility not to look away—not least because the same news that has shaken the civ-

ilized world to its core has emboldened anti-Semites and terrorist sympathizers across the globe. We have seen thousands of demonstrators cheer on terrorist violence from the streets of Western cities.

In London, many Jewish children were kept home from school on Friday out of fears for their safety. In Chicago, a bomb threat forced a local synagogue to evacuate. In Sydney, Australia, a supposedly pro-Palestinian gathering devolved into a sickening flashback to the worst stain on the last century of human history as demonstrators chanted: “Gas the Jews.” And on college campuses across America, leftist student groups cloaked vile anti-Semitism in a thin veneer of performative, woke jargon.

So, Madam President, friends of Israel simply cannot afford to be silent. And as Israel’s closest ally, the United States must lead by our example in supporting its efforts to defend itself for as long as it takes. As I outlined over the State work period, this means loudly and clearly distinguishing between the aggressor and the victim in this war. No matter how many voices in the media attempt to “both-sides” a terrorist attack, there is simply no moral equivalence here.

Responsibility for the murder of Israelis lies with the terrorists who pulled the trigger and the regime that arms and trains them, and responsibility for the suffering of the Palestinian people lies with the Hamas terrorists who consolidated power by flinging rival civilian officials off of rooftops, who use scarce building supplies to dig terror tunnels, to turn drinking water pipes into rocket launchers, and who use residents of Gaza as human shields.

Make no mistake, the surest way to stop violence against Israelis and oppression of Palestinians is to wipe the terrorists like Hamas from the face of the Earth. To that end, the United States must continue to provide maximum support to Israel’s counterterrorist operation as long as it takes. And just as importantly, we have to reestablish deterrence against the Iranian regime that not only directly threatens American’s interest in a peaceful and stable Middle East, but also bears the blood of hundreds of Americans and plots to kill even more.

America’s disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, the desperate pursuit of a new nuclear deal, and the failure to respond decisively to attacks on U.S. forces in Syria have weakened our deterrence against the world’s largest state sponsor of terror. America’s weakness left our allies and partners with serious questions about the credibility of our commitments. And if we fail to present clear and devastating consequences of further violence against America, as well as our friends in Israel, we will make deterring an even bigger strategic adversary in Asia even more difficult.

Reestablishing effective deterrence means investing in American military

strength. It means investing in an industrial base that is capable of equipping both U.S. forces and our allies and partners to meet authoritarian oppression in Europe, in Asia, and in the Middle East, and it means responding to challenges with credible and unflinching resolve. This is a fundamental responsibility of governing. Full stop.

I will have more to say in the coming days, but for right now, this is not merely a terrorist war against Israel. It is part of a clear and present danger to the United States and the entire civilized world.

This, Madam President, is a time for choosing. As Israel works to eliminate the terrorists who threaten its existence, the United States must reaffirm our commitment to Israel’s security, and we must continue to demonstrate by our leadership that no country should offer safe haven to those who aid and abet terror.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, well, we all know what has happened since October 7. Hamas has launched more than 6,000 rockets into Israel. They have sent more than 1,000 terrorists across the border to murder civilians. This is the most devastating slaughter of Jews since the Holocaust. They have killed more than 1,400 Israelis; 291 of them have been soldiers. They have taken 199 hostages, including an unknown number of Americans. This was also one of the deadliest terrorist attacks in our history. They killed 30 U.S. citizens, and 13 are still missing or are unaccounted for.

Israel is the victim. Even the Biden White House has acknowledged that. This hasn’t stopped several of my Democratic colleagues from calling for a cease-fire. All of this, also, has not stopped Black Lives Matter and other pro-Palestinian groups from glorifying the mass slaughter of Jews.

Students for Justice, in Palestine, called it a “historic win.”

Jews in New York, Atlanta, Washington, DC, London, Berlin, and so many other cities around the globe are once again living in fear.

Just this weekend, protesters in Nashville, TN, refused to condemn the horrific violence against the Israelis. Instead, they insisted that these innocent people had it coming because their government’s politics don’t line up with the radical left’s talking points.

This is, indeed, insanity. If we allow these positions to define our foreign policy, we put the lives of Israelis and Americans and our allies in danger.

The United States designated Hamas as a foreign terrorist organization in