

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 Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.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 re-establish 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

1997. Their stated goal is to destroy the State of Israel through jihad. Over the years, we have seen them commit acts of violence so depraved that allies to the so-called Palestinian cause deny them entirely rather than attempt to rationalize them. We know, right now, that 600,000 Gazans have been evacuated but that they have trapped more than enough women and children to use as human shields. Absolutely despicable.

We also know that they use international aid money not for humanitarian aid but to fund their efforts, their war efforts—their jihad. Iran is the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism and sends \$100 million annually to Hamas. That is in addition to supplying them with technology, logistical support, and weapons.

When the Biden administration announced their plan to give the Iranians access to \$6 billion in frozen assets, we knew exactly what that meant for Israel. The constant refrain from the Biden administration is that there is “no direct link to Iran regarding this attack.” It is time for whomever wrote that talking point to turn on the news, to look at the pictures that are on the screen, to listen to what you are hearing from the Ayatollah and some of the Iranian officials who are, by the way, meeting with Hamas leadership in Qatar.

In the first hours of the attack, the Biden administration projected nothing but weakness. They deleted multiple tweets calling for a cease-fire. It took the President almost 12 hours to make a statement. This sent a very clear message to our enemies. It also sends a message to our allies.

We can start by giving Israel what they need to eradicate these terrorists. Last week, I sent a letter urging President Biden to support Israel in all possible ways. Under President Trump, we cut aid to the Palestinians because the Palestinian Authority used that money to reward terrorism. In 2021, President Biden reversed that policy, and since then, he has sent more than \$730 million to the Palestinians, even though he knows there is a high risk. We know money is fungible, and we know what Iran does with their money—they fund terrorism; they fund their proxies.

And, while we are at it, let's start treating Iran like the dangerous state sponsor of terror it is. Last week, I led 19 Senate Republicans, in a letter, calling on President Biden to permanently freeze Iran's access to that \$6 billion. We should send those dollars to Israel to pay for the damage that Hamas has done. There should be no more backdoor deals with Qatar, no more silent agreements, no more quiet agreements. Let's have a formal agreement that will stop the backpedaling and will stop the intentions to release that money, which is what they will do when the media attention on this issue dissipates.

None of this will matter if we don't root out the incompetence and mali-

cious influence in our own government. Last week, I sent a letter to President Biden demanding the immediate removal of Jake Sullivan as his National Security Advisor. He was wrong about Afghanistan, the Middle East, and that nuclear deal with Iran in 2015. He has got to go, as do the Iranian assets that President Biden has given top secret security clearances to.

Last month, I stood right here and described how President Biden sent Robert Malley, Ariane Tabatabai, and other operatives to negotiate the failed Iran nuclear deal. Now, Mr. Malley and Ms. Tabatabai have been involved with the Iran Experts Initiative, and then the President gave them top secret security clearances and sent them to negotiate on the Iran deal. This has to stop.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that these letters be printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,
Washington, DC, October 8, 2023.

President JOSEPH R. BIDEN,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We write today to express our unwavering support for Israel, our greatest ally in the Middle East, and our outrage at your administration's failed leadership on the international stage.

Israel is at war. Yesterday, Hamas, the Iran-backed Palestinian terrorist group, launched an unprecedented and coordinated land, air, and sea attack against Israel. This occurred during the Jewish holiday of Simchat Torah, the day after the 50th anniversary of the Yom Kippur War, and on Shabbat—a day of rest and peace for Jews around the world. Terrorists have infiltrated Israel, taking innocent Israeli civilians and servicemembers hostage. Hundreds of Israelis have died, and the fighting has not ceased.

This violent attack deserves a strong, unequivocal condemnation by the United States. Instead, while the attacks persisted and Israel was threatened, your administration initially issued a statement calling on Israel to “refrain from violence.” So far, the administration's response has been far weaker than Israel—a shining beacon of democracy and our most important ally in the Middle East—deserves.

While this is not the first act of aggression by the Hamas terrorists against one of our greatest allies, it is certainly the boldest. The failures of this administration on the world stage have no doubt emboldened those who would wish America and our allies harm. Reports indicate that U.S. arms abandoned during the disastrous Afghanistan withdrawal ended up in Hamas' hands. This terrorist organization is also funded by the Iranian regime, the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, whose coffers this administration has filled with over \$6 billion in sanctions relief. Indeed, recent reports have revealed the existence of the Iran Experts Initiative (IEI), an Iranian regime-backed foreign influence network. Included among the network's membership is Ariane Tabatabai, now chief of staff to the Assistant Secretary of Defense for Special Operations and Low Intensity Conflict, along with other close contacts of your Special Envoy for Iran, Robert Malley—whose security clearance the State Department suspended earlier

this year and who is now subject to an FBI investigation for his alleged mishandling of classified information. The world needs American leadership, and this administration has left a void that the New Axis of Evil and terrorist groups like Hamas have already begun exploiting.

Over 75 years ago, the United States was the first nation to recognize the Jewish state of Israel and affirm its right to exist. Now, in the face of senseless attacks by Iran-backed Hamas terrorists, we must again stand with Israel and reaffirm its right to defend itself. The United States of America does not abandon its friends. We urge this administration to support Israel however possible, including by providing any and all weapons and munitions necessary, and to punish the terrorists who did this, along with those who aid them. We must act swiftly and strongly.

Sincerely,

MARSHA BLACKBURN.
BILL HAGERTY.
United States Sen-
ators.

TIM BURCHETT.
CHUCK FLEISCHMANN.
DIANA HARSHBARGER.
JOHN ROSE.
SCOTT DESJARLAIS, M.D.
MARK E. GREEN, M.D.
ANDY OGLE.
Members of Congress.

UNITED STATES SENATE,
Washington, DC, October 9, 2023.

President JOSEPH R. BIDEN,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: We write today to affirm our unwavering support for Israel, our greatest ally in the Middle East, and call on the U.S. Department of State to freeze the accounts in Qatar containing \$6 billion in Iranian funds that were released from South Korean accounts in September.

Since Hamas began its attack on Israel on Saturday, more than 4,000 rockets have been fired from Gaza, countless Israelis have been injured, and more than 130 individuals have been kidnapped by Hamas terrorists. Hundreds of civilians have been brutally murdered in Israel, and recent reports confirm that several Americans were killed in the attacks.

Iran is the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism, and Wall Street Journal reported that the Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps worked with Hamas to plan the ongoing attacks on Israel. These horrific attacks come on the heels of the State Department issuing sanctions waivers for Iranian funds held in South Korean accounts to be converted from won to euros and then transferred to bank accounts in Qatar.

To stand by and allow Iran access to these funds as Hamas infiltrates Israel and murders, rapes, and mutilates countless Israelis is unconscionable. Your administration claims these funds are only available for humanitarian use, but money is fungible, and there is a significant risk they could be used to further efforts by Iran or Hamas against Israel. Moreover, allowing \$6 billion to flow into Iran's economy, even if the purpose is for humanitarian aid, allows the Iranian regime to reallocate even more funds to supporting terrorism. Oversight over the use of this \$6 billion is not enough, and the oversight mechanism is crippled by your reported decision to pull the longstanding Treasury attaché from Qatar. The State Department should immediately rescind the waivers that allowed Iranian funds to be converted and moved to more accessible bank accounts, as well as work with U.S. ally Qatar to immediately freeze the accounts containing these funds.

We must stand with Israel and restrict access to these Iranian funds. Iran should be placed under the most stringent sanctions admissible. Anything short of this is unacceptable and only aids in the ability of Iran and Hamas to fund these heinous acts.

Sincerely,

Marsha Blackburn, United States Senator; Steve Daines, United States Senator; Kevin Cramer, United States Senator; James Lankford, United States Senator; John Cornyn, United States Senator; Lindsey Graham, United States Senator; Tom Cotton, United States Senator; Mike Braun, United States Senator; Thom Tillis, United States Senator; Rick Scott, United States Senator.

John Thune, United States Senator; Mike Lee, United States Senator; Bill Cassidy, M.D., United States Senator; Katie Boyd Britt, United States Senator; Pete Ricketts, United States Senator; Markwayne Mullin, United States Senator; Eric Schmitt, United States Senator; Marco Rubio, United States Senator; Ted Budd, United States Senator; Roger Marshall, M.D., United States Senator.

U.S. SENATE,
October 13, 2023.

President JOSEPH R. BIDEN,
The White House,
Washington, DC.

DEAR MR. PRESIDENT: I write to you today to demand the immediate removal of Jake Sullivan as your National Security Advisor. Mr. Sullivan has routinely misled the entire government about the status of security threats around the world. Just eight days before Hamas launched their barbaric surprise attack against Israel, he stated, "the Middle East is quieter today than it has been in two decades." Yet, to date, over 1,200 Israelis have been killed, over 150 hostages have been taken from the safety of their homes, and at least 27 Americans lives have been lost, with at least 14 Americans still missing. This is Jake Sullivan's perception of a quiet Middle East. This is unacceptable.

Sullivan has been dead wrong on how to engage with Iran since his first day as National Security Advisor. His policies of appeasement toward Iran have only emboldened the world's largest state sponsor of terrorism. Sullivan had direct influence in establishing the remarkably flawed 2015 Joint Comprehensive Plan of Action (JCPOA), commonly referred to as the Iran nuclear deal. Thankfully, this decision was later reversed, sparing the world from an expanded Iranian influence under this misguided policy that allowed Iran to continue to fund its terrorist proxies and build up its ballistic missile program. As your National Security Advisor, we have since seen Mr. Sullivan reinstitute many of the mistakes from the failed JCPOA. Easing sanctions against Iran and refusing to enforce others is not an effective solution, and this attack is clear evidence of that fact.

You simply cannot negotiate with the savages of the Iranian regime. The Iranian regime has no qualms with funding extremist terrorists, including Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah, all of which seek to destroy Israel. We have seen Iran-backed Hamas murder innocent civilians, we have evidence that Hamas has beheaded babies and burned Israelis alive, and we are all aware that they are taking hostages for rape, mutilation, and murder. Their actions directly mock every freedom-loving American. To stop their spread of influence throughout the region, we must immediately reverse course and reinforce our commitment on the sanctions levied against Iran. Anyone who thinks the appeasement of Tehran is an effective national security strategy must be removed for the sake of all Americans.

Sullivan's deleterious mistakes with respect to Iran and Iran-backed Hamas only build on his earlier involvement in the administration's disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan. There, we stood by and watched the Taliban take over the country in less than two weeks. We cannot have someone with his notable history of poor decision-making, and lack of critical insights, as the most senior advisor to the President on our nation's security matters. Continuing to do so is misguided. You said it yourself, Mr. President—the United States must stand with Israel. Leaving Jake Sullivan in his current position hinders both Israel's, as well as the United States', national security posture.

Sincerely,

MARSHA BLACKBURN,
United States Senator.

Mrs. BLACKBURN. Madam President, we all have a choice here: Will the United States act with courage or are we going to sit quiet and allow this barbarism to continue?

Israeli forces report that Hamas bound boys and girls before shooting them in the head—children who were bound and then shot in the head. They found families who had been burned alive. There are reports that young women had been raped and then mutilated. Hamas turned a music festival into a killing field. The beheadings of babies—we have heard those reports. These will live in infamy.

The historians have a phrase to describe massacres like this. It is "Holocaust by bullets." It is inconceivable that any of my colleagues could tolerate the demands that Israel surrender to terrorists.

It is time for this President, his advisers, and all of our colleagues—all of our colleagues—who told the Israelis to stand down to take a good, hard look at where complacency and appeasement gets us. Look at Gaza. Look at Iran. Look at Afghanistan. Look at China. Look at our own southern border. Since October 1, Border Patrol has apprehended 30 Iranians. That is since the 1st of this month, this year. This is who the Border Patrol has apprehended: 30 Iranians, 60 Syrians, 35 Pakistanis, more than 100 Russians, 285 Afghans, and 2,000 Chinese—trying to cross our southern border undetected.

Now, do they all mean us harm? Probably not, but we cannot know that for sure because this administration refuses to acknowledge the possibility that terrorists are coming across this southern border—246 apprehended since Joe Biden became President. What are we doing? What are we doing? How do we know the intentions of those 30 Iranians? 2,000 Chinese? 100 Russians? Is there a guarantee they are not here to kill us?

The job of Hamas: kill people. You have watched them do it with glee. Terrorists, what do they do? They set up terror cells. They wait to strike to kill you—to kill you.

I have got to tell you: This administration needs to grow a spine. They need to grow a spine, and they need to be solid and resolute that they are going to protect this country and our

citizens and our allies. And our enemies are going to know that they are an enemy, because we will treat them like that. We have got a choice: We can show courage; we can surrender; we can practice appeasement. But that is the choice.

This country needs to show courage and leadership. I hope that this body and this administration will choose courage and leadership.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. CORNYN. 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.

Mr. CORNYN. Madam President, 9 days have passed since Hamas launched its unprovoked attack on the State of Israel. Hamas fighters have entered Israel by land, air, and sea. They brutally murdered, abused, and kidnapped innocent civilians. They paraded hostages through the streets of Gaza like trophies.

Hamas terrorists—and that is exactly what they are—killed at least 1,400 Israelis, making it the deadliest days for Jews since the Holocaust. Nearly 200 additional people were kidnapped by Hamas, including at least 13 Americans who are currently unaccounted for, on top of the 30 Americans who we know have been killed in the attack.

Since this war began—and that is what it is, a war on the State of Israel—we have witnessed evil in its purest form. There is no excusing, no equivocating, no explaining the actions of Hamas. It is not trying to protect the Palestinian people or promote freedom; Hamas's singular goal is to annihilate the Jewish people and wipe Israel off the map. Any attempt to explain or justify or provide some argument of moral equivalence is completely wrong, and it is dangerous. It plays directly into these terrorists' hands.

First of all, Israel has a right to defend itself. It has a right to exist—something Hamas wishes was not the case. If Hamas or any other terrorist group launches an attack on Israel, its government has both the right and the responsibility to protect its citizens.

Second, the number of civilian casualties on both sides, particularly those children and babies, is absolutely appalling and heartbreaking. But then again, the innocent always bear the ultimate cost of war.

Over the last several days, we have seen videos and heard firsthand accounts of the terror Hamas has unleashed against Israel and the Israeli people. These images and stories are extremely difficult to watch, but they are also very important to share. People need to know what is happening. They need to know the truth, not some

candy-coated version of the truth. The people of the United States and the rest of the world need to understand the magnitude and the threat of what is unfolding in the Middle East.

Texas, I am happy to say, is home to a sizable Jewish community. For these individuals, the war in Israel is far more than just a sad clip or the most recent news; it is a deeply personal attack on their faith and their family, because many Texans—many Americans—have relatives living in Israel as I speak.

Last week, I visited the Temple Emanu-El in Dallas to hear from several members of the Jewish community in my State whose families and friends were directly impacted by this war against Israel. I heard from one incredible mom, Kim, whose sons—26-year-old Benji and 24-year-old Sammy—both serve in the Israel Defense Forces. They were born and raised in Dallas and moved to Israel after high school and joined the IDF. Benji's wife Leah is a New York native and also a soldier in the Israel Defense Forces. Kim says she struggles to sleep at night. She is constantly checking her phone to see if she is getting messages and to make sure her two sons are safe.

I also heard from another brave woman, Aya, whose family moved from Israel to Dallas just 2 months ago. Aya and her husband and her three children came to the United States from a small kibbutz near the Gaza Strip, where she was a teacher. She said she and her husband were awakened last Saturday by a string of messages on her phone from friends, neighbors, and former students describing the terror that was unfolding in their former home. Aya told me about conversations with former students who were terrified that they might be next. She shared stories of people fleeing and showed me photos of four people who were believed to have been kidnapped and two others who had been killed.

As hard as it is to hear these tragic stories—and I know there were even more difficult ones to share—they help us all understand the depravity and the evil of what Hamas has unleashed on innocent men, women, and children—civilians—in Israel. Although this is thousands of miles away from where we are, it affects all of us deeply.

Of course, these pictures show the brutality of Hamas and underscore the need to continue our support for the nation of Israel as it tries to eradicate this terrorist threat. Over the last several days, the support for Israel has been overwhelming. It transcends party lines, religion, race, and ethnicity. This is not an issue of opinion; this is a battle between right and wrong, good and evil.

Of course, the United States has a long and proud history of supporting Israel since its inception in 1948, and it is important for Hamas and its allies—and they, of course, are a proxy force for Iran, the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism, as is Hezbollah in Lebanon—it

is important for the terrorists and their sponsors to understand that America's support for Israel is not limited to rhetoric. If Israel needs weapons, the United States will provide them. If Israel needs support gathering or analyzing intelligence, the United States will provide it. If Israel needs help with humanitarian assistance, medical supplies—whatever they need—the United States and the people of this great country will answer the call.

The United States will not toe the line between good and evil. We will stand with our allies as they defend their home against a terrorist invasion, just as we did when cowardly terrorists took 3,000 lives here in Washington, DC, and Pennsylvania about 20 years ago.

As the fighting continues, I am reminded of the saying that has been around for years. It goes: If Hamas laid down its weapons today, there would be no more violence. If Israel laid down its weapons today, there would be no more Israel.

Hamas is not fighting for peace. It is not fighting to defend their way of life or their territory. It is trying to wipe out an entire people. It is trying to wipe Israel off the map—with the help, support, and training, the aiding and abetting by Iran, the No. 1 state sponsor of terrorism, as I said. That is what is at stake here.

Israel has been the lone beacon of democracy in the Middle East. It is a sacred home for the Jewish people. Christians travel to Israel each year to look at the place where their faith and their religion were born.

Of course, Israel is also a longtime friend and ally of the United States and has always had America's full and unwavering support. Whether there is a Democrat or a Republican in the White House, whether Democrats have the majority or are in the minority or vice versa, the United States has always supported Israel and will continue to do so during these very difficult and tragic days.

This week, the Senate is expected to pass a bipartisan resolution condemning Hamas's attack on Israel and expressing our support for Israel's response. I am proud to be a cosponsor of that legislation—or that resolution, and I hope it will pass the Senate with a unanimous vote.

America must remain steadfast in its commitment to support Israel and continue to counter threats posed by terrorist organizations around the world. As I have said, we have been the victim of some of these terrorist organizations, and Americans have lost their lives as a result of our failure of imagination to dream of the possibility that they might not just attack over there but would actually attack us here.

Of course, we all hope and pray for a day in the future when the Middle East can be a place of peace, stability, and democracy. We simply will not reach that point without a strong and secure Israel.

I stand in full support of Israel and will continue to advocate for any form of assistance she needs, whether it is military, humanitarian, or otherwise.

We must stand with Israel. The United States does not bow down to terrorist organizations, and we will not allow our allies to be bullied and beaten by Hamas or any other terrorist organization.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. HIRONO). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mr. CARDIN. Madam President, I come to the floor today to express my shock and horror at what Hamas has done in its terrorist attack on Israel. It is difficult to comprehend the evil we witnessed last week.

Before Saturday, October 7, 2023, there were over 1,000 innocent Jewish people going about their lives in southern Israel. They were young people at a music festival, grandparents outside of their homes, children celebrating birthdays, mothers with little babies in their arms. Hamas massacred them all. We have not seen this kind of atrocity since the early days of the ISIS caliphate.

Tragically, we must not only mourn the death that Hamas left behind; we must try to rescue the hostages—some of them American citizens—that Hamas dragged back to Gaza.

For the Jewish community around the world and for all Israelis, this was the most horrific week in generations—some of the toughest in Israel's entire history. So I want to make one point crystal clear: The United States stands shoulder to shoulder with the State of Israel.

Seventy-five years ago, Harry Truman was the first world leader to officially recognize Israel, only 11 minutes after its creation. He did that because the United States and Israel share common values. And for over seven decades, the relationship between our two nations has only gotten stronger and deeper.

So despite the pain that many of us feel from these barbaric attacks—and we will continue to feel—now is the time for us to show our total support for Israel, not just in words but by our deeds. This is exactly what we are doing.

From the bottom of my heart, I want to thank the U.S. Embassy team in Israel and our Embassies across the region for their tireless efforts. Even as they themselves have taken cover from rocket fire, American diplomats have stepped up to work hand in hand with Israel to serve over a half a million Americans who are there. In fact, across the Biden administration, public

servants have been working around the clock to help Israel make sure it has everything it needs to defend its people.

President Biden has had several calls with Prime Minister Netanyahu, offering America's full support. He has also ordered the USS *Ford's* carrier strike group to the eastern Mediterranean.

A warning that Hezbollah in Lebanon and the regime in Iran need to hear loud and clear: Do not join this conflict. Don't even think about it. The United States and our allies and partners will not tolerate such actions.

Our Secretaries of State and of Defense are working nonstop to coordinate the flow of security assistance to Israel, and planeloads of U.S. defense items have already landed. And they have both been in the region working with our partners to shore up support for Israel.

Congress also has to make sure we do everything we can to help come together to help Israel. Bipartisan congressional support has always been the bedrock of the U.S.-Israel relationship.

In the days since this attack, I have been talking with my colleagues throughout the Senate and the House. I have had several conversations with the Republican ranking member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, Senator RISCH. I have let the administration know our committee is prepared to work quietly and quickly in a bipartisan manner to support Israel. That is why, earlier today, I introduced, along with Senator RISCH and more than 91 cosponsors, a bipartisan resolution that sends a clear message that America stands with Israel—always has, always will.

And over the course of the next days and weeks and months, I will be leading my colleagues to make sure Israel gets everything it needs to defend itself and its people. That means replenishing Israel's air defenses so that they have what they need to repel the rocket attacks. That means authorizing supplemental money for Israel's defense as it navigates the aftermath of this attack. And, as the chair of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, that means getting the President's nominee for Ambassador to Israel, Jacob Lew, confirmed and in his post as soon as possible. We need a confirmed Ambassador in Israel to assist in these efforts.

We also need to be pushing back against the narrative that Hamas is trying to spread across the global community, the idea that there is some equivalency between Israel's security operations and Hamas's terror attacks. There is no equivalency here. This is about Israel's right to defend itself against a designated terrorist organization. It is about freeing abducted citizens—women, children, old people—who have been held hostage.

Now, I am concerned about the safety and welfare of the Palestinians, because Hamas does not care one bit about the safety and welfare of mil-

lions of Palestinians, their lives, and their humanity. During their terror attack on Israel, Hamas also killed Arabs, including a heroic ambulance driver who went to help the wounded people at the music festival, because that is what decent human beings do. They help in times of need. Hamas has made them pay with their lives. So most Palestinians want no part of what Hamas is doing, and I believe we must find a way to support safe passage for those residents of Gaza who are trying to get out.

We also need to make sure that innocent people stuck there get the food and water and medical care that they so desperately desire. The best thing we can do for Palestinians in Gaza is to make sure Hamas can never do this again.

Finally, as we look to the future, we must not allow this conflict to derail the normalization process that has been in the works between Israel and Saudi Arabia. This would be an absolute game changer, and Hamas knows that.

Agreeing to normal relations is the stepping stone to peace and prosperity for Israel and for the entire region, including for the Palestinian people. A stable and prosperous Middle East that includes a stable and prosperous Palestinian state is one of the best ways to undercut Iran's resistance ideology and Hamas's goal of destroying Israel.

They don't want a Palestinian state at peace with Israel and accountable to the Palestinian people. We cannot let terrorists win. We cannot let them win, and I know that we will not, thanks to the resilience of the Israeli people.

Early on the morning of October 7, an Israeli journalist who lives near the border of Gaza heard mortar rockets flying overhead. He rushed with his wife into a safe room in his home with his 3-year-old and 1-year-old daughters. When he knew Hamas had infiltrated their kibbutz, he thought:

We're going to die here.

He called his father, who lived in Tel Aviv. His father told him:

You have to be quiet. You have to be locked.

His father, a retired general in his sixties, was going to get in his car and come rescue them. He told his son:

Nobody, nobody can stop me.

Over the next 10 hours, the grandfather fought his way south. He got to the door of his son's house and then found the dead bodies of terrorists outside. He called out to his son to open the safe room door. From inside, one of the girls recognized his voice and shouted:

Grandfather is here. Grandfather is here.

That is when they knew they were safe.

That is the kind of courage Israelis have. That is the kind of bravery that they see in Israel through this terrible tragedy. And we must not rest until our committee, our Congress, and our Nation has done everything we can to support Israel in this time of need.

So to my colleagues on both sides of the aisle here in the Senate, let's work together to support Israel.

And to those who committed these atrocities, we will hold you accountable for these crimes against humanity, no matter how long it takes.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. CARDIN). Without objection, it is so ordered.

Mrs. GILLIBRAND. Mr. President, it has been more than a week since Hamas terrorists attacked Israel, killing more than 1,400 people and wounding thousands more. But every day, still more horrifying stories and images emerge, depicting unspeakable atrocities.

Just the other day, there was an interview with an Israeli father on CNN. The father said his 8-year-old daughter went missing during the attack. After 2 agonizing days, the father learned his little girl was dead. But it was his reaction that really hit me. When he heard the horrific news, the father said that he felt relieved because "if you know anything about what they do to people in Gaza, that is worse than death."

Can you imagine what it must be like to fear your loved ones—your sons, your daughters—could be suffering; that they could be enduring a fate that is worse than death? As a mother, I cannot even imagine what it must be like to lose a child, let alone in this way, to see loved ones slaughtered, mutilated, and burned. But to see them taken hostage or paraded through the streets, to worry that at any moment they could be enduring unspeakable horrors, it is a pain that is unconceivable and seems impossible to bear.

On Long Island, we have a family whose son was taken hostage. His name is Omer Neutra. He is just 22 years old—not much older than my eldest. Omer was an honors student in high school, and he loves the New York Knicks. He deferred his acceptance to Binghamton University to spend a gap year in Israel and join the IDF.

On the day of the attack, he was defending the Gaza border. But he was last seen being forcibly removed by the terrorists and has not been heard from since.

Omer is just 1 of nearly 200 people who were abducted by Hamas: toddlers, babies, teenagers, moms, grandmothers, grandfathers, people who cannot go without their medicine or are even too young to walk. Entire families were captured and used as human shields.

One 85-year-old grandmother, Yaffa Adar, was carried off in a golf cart as

she held her head high. But her family says without her medication, it is likely going to be a lot of pain for her. A mother was on the phone with her son when he was abducted, and she heard him say to the terrorists: "Don't take me. I'm too young." Another mother, Shiri Silberman-Bibas, can be seen in her captor's video clutching her two young children, sheer terror in her eyes. And 23-year-old Hersh Goldberg-Polin had his arm blown off from the elbow down before he disappeared near Gaza. A young woman was thrust brutally into the back of a truck, her hands cable-tied behind her back, blood streaming down her arms, legs, and her back. A Holocaust survivor in a wheelchair—imagine surviving the Holocaust only to be taken hostage by terrorists. This is the kind of anti-Semitic violence Jewish people have faced for millennia.

Until last week, many of these people were ordinary, peaceful people just going about their daily lives: working, going to school, dancing at a music festival. Now we don't know what has become of them, and many of their families fear the worst.

As the days wear on and the situation in Gaza becomes more desperate, the danger to those hostages only grows. Already, Hamas terrorists have threatened to execute hostages. As a U.S. Senator, my top priority is the safety of the American people, and I am going to be working closely with the State Department to secure the return of 13 Americans who are still unaccounted for, like Omer and Hersh.

But as we continue in this mission, I want the hostages and their families to know, we will not stop fighting for you. We will do whatever it takes to bring you home, and we will never give in to terrorists.

I yield the floor.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

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

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. REED). Without objection, it is so ordered.

CLOTURE MOTION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Pursuant to rule XXII, the Chair lays before the Senate the pending cloture motion, which the clerk will state.

The legislative clerk read as follows:

CLOTURE MOTION

We, the undersigned Senators, in accordance with the provisions of rule XXII of the Standing Rules of the Senate, do hereby move to bring to a close debate on the nomination of Executive Calendar No. 309, Jennifer L. Hall, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the District of Delaware.

Charles E. Schumer, Richard J. Durbin, Tammy Duckworth, Mazie Hirono, Richard Blumenthal, Christopher A. Coons, Alex Padilla, Patty Murray, Sheldon Whitehouse, Debbie Stabenow,

Tina Smith, Benjamin L. Cardin, Chris Van Hollen, Tim Kaine, Brian Schatz, Christopher Murphy, Peter Welch.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. By unanimous consent, the mandatory quorum call has been waived.

The question is, Is it the sense of the Senate that debate on the nomination of Jennifer L. Hall, of Pennsylvania, to be United States District Judge for the District of Delaware, shall be brought to a close?

The yeas and nays are mandatory under the rule.

The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk called the roll.

Mr. SCHUMER. I announce that the Senator from California (Ms. BUTLER), the Senator from Illinois (Mr. DURBIN), and the Senator from Pennsylvania (Mr. FETTERMAN) are necessarily absent.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senators are necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO), the Senator from West Virginia (Mrs. CAPITO), the Senator from Texas (Mr. CRUZ), the Senator from Kansas (Mr. MORAN), the Senator from Kentucky (Mr. PAUL), the Senator from Idaho (Mr. RISCH), the Senator from Florida (Mr. RUBIO), and the Senator from South Carolina (Mr. SCOTT).

The yeas and nays resulted—yeas 63, nays 26, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 254 Ex.]

YEAS—63

Baldwin	Heinrich	Romney
Bennet	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Blumenthal	Hirono	Rounds
Booker	Kaine	Sanders
Brown	Kelly	Schatz
Budd	King	Schumer
Cantwell	Klobuchar	Shaheen
Cardin	Lankford	Sinema
Carper	Lee	Smith
Casey	Luján	Stabenow
Cassidy	Manchin	Tester
Collins	Markey	Tillis
Coons	Menendez	Van Hollen
Cornyn	Merkley	Vance
Cortez Masto	Murkowski	Warner
Cramer	Murphy	Warnock
Duckworth	Murray	Warren
Gillibrand	Ossoff	Welch
Graham	Padilla	Whitehouse
Grassley	Peters	Wyden
Hassan	Reed	Young

NAYS—26

Blackburn	Hagerty	Mullin
Boozman	Hawley	Ricketts
Braun	Hoeven	Schmitt
Britt	Hyde-Smith	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Johnson	Sullivan
Crapo	Kennedy	Thune
Daines	Lummis	Tuberville
Ernst	Marshall	Wicker
Fischer	McConnell	

NOT VOTING—11

Barrasso	Durbin	Risch
Butler	Fetterman	Rubio
Capito	Moran	Scott (SC)
Cruz	Paul	

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. HEINRICH). On this vote, the yeas are 63, the nays are 26.

The motion is agreed to.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Minnesota.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate

proceed to the consideration of Executive Calendar No. 148, that the Senate vote on the nomination without intervening action or debate, and that the motion to reconsider be considered made and laid upon the table and the President be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, the clerk will report the nomination.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Karen Sasahara, of Massachusetts, a Career Member of the Senior Foreign Service, Class of Minister-Counselor, to be Ambassador Extraordinary and Plenipotentiary of the United States of America to the State of Kuwait.

Thereupon, the Senate proceeded to consider the nomination.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The question is, Will the Senate advise and consent to the Sasahara nomination?

The nomination was confirmed.

LEGISLATIVE SESSION

MORNING BUSINESS

Ms. SMITH. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the Senate proceed to legislative session and be in a period of morning business, with Senators permitted to speak therein for up to 10 minutes each.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Without objection, it is so ordered.

VOTE EXPLANATION

Mr. HAWLEY. Mr. President, had I been present, I would have voted no on the confirmation of Executive Calendar No. 176, Brendan Abell Hurson, of Maryland, to be United States District Judge for the District of Maryland.

ADDITIONAL STATEMENTS

TRIBUTE TO DOUG HOWARD

• Mrs. BLACKBURN. Mr. President, Tennessee is home to the world's most talented singers, songwriters, musicians, and composers. The music that these gifted artists create connects with us on such a personal level that sometimes it is easy to forget about the dedicated industry professionals working behind the scenes to make sure we hear it.

Doug Howard has been at the center of Nashville's music industry since the 1970s, first as a student, and then in the worlds of publishing and recording before heading back to academia. Last year, he retired from his role as the dean of Belmont University's Mike Curb College of Entertainment and Music, and earlier this month, he received the Mulloy Award of Excellence for his important impact on the entertainment industry and his notable service to the Belmont University music community.