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Senate

The Senate met at 10 a.m. and was called to order by the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia.

PRAYER

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

Let us pray.

Almighty God, ruler of the universe, provide our lawmakers with a perspective that will enable You to use them for Your glory. May they see themselves as called to serve You and the people of our Nation and world. Use this perspective to motivate them to remove the obstacles that prevent them from working together and accomplishing Your purposes. As they continually seek to discover opportunities they agree can make them more productive, give them the wisdom and courage to always strive to honor You.

And, Lord, bring a speedy end to the Hamas-Israel war.

We pray in Your powerful 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 legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, October 17, 2023.

To the Senate:

Under the provisions of rule I, paragraph 3, of the Standing Rules of the Senate, I hereby

appoint the Honorable RAPHAEL G. WARNOCK, a Senator from the State of Georgia, to perform the duties of the Chair.

PATTY MURRAY,
President pro tempore.

Mr. WARNOCK 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 assistant legislative 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. Mr. President, as I have said before, but still feel it deeply in my gut, no words can fully express the horror of Hamas's attack on Israel two Saturdays ago.

In a single day, 1,300 Jews murdered in cold blood: men, women, children, the elderly, the disabled, as old as nearly 100 years old, down to toddlers and infants.

I was told that at one of the kibbutzim, Hamas rounded up over a hundred people—from 90 years old down to little babies—into the recreation room and then machine-gunned every one of them down.

And now, it is reported that about 200 hostages are being held by Hamas, including Americans. I just walked by the TV, they said they just showed the first hostage, a 22-year-old girl. It wrenches your stomach how evil these people are. How evil. We Jewish people have been used to this for thousands of years. We live with it.

As I mentioned when I talked about the kibbutz, I remembered my great-grandmother. In 1941, the Nazis came into Europe and told her—she was well-known because her late husband was a famous rabbi—Gather your greater family on the porch of your home. They made the 800 Jews in Chortkiv go to the town square, which was near her home. Thirty-five people gathered, from 88 years old to 3 months. They said to her, You are all coming with us. She said, We are not moving. They machine-gunned every one of them down, in front of the others. This is what we live with, and this is why we are so resolute that the threat of Hamas must be extinguished.

This morning, my four colleagues who traveled to Israel and I will have a phone conversation with President Biden about how we can be most helpful to bring all of the hostages home safely. I promised the families we met that we will do everything we can, and we are exploring every option. The five of us met with the hostage families, and there wasn't a dry eye in the house watching the videos. Some of them had videos; Hamas sent some of the videos to the families. We were just weeping together about the cruel, inhumanity of Hamas and the desperation these families had to get their loved ones back.

October 7 will go down as a day of inextinguishable grief. The deadliest single day for Jews since the Holocaust—

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



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a reminder of much older, darker days we must never return to.

So when my colleagues and I traveled to Israel this past weekend, we delivered a simple message to the Jewish people: America will stand with Israel as an unrelenting partner.

And I promised that I will do everything possible to ensure that the U.S. Senate provides Israel with the support she needs to defend her people. As the highest ranking Jewish elected official ever in America, as the first Jewish majority leader, I will do everything I can to see that that happens, as will so many of my colleagues, Jew and non-Jew alike, Democrat and Republican alike, which we so appreciate.

The Senate must, above all, work quickly and swiftly to draft, consider, and pass a strong aid package for Israel as soon as we can. That includes military support, intelligence support, diplomatic help. On the military side, the Israelis have outlined to us on their trip what they have needed, and we have conveyed that to the administration.

And very importantly, I spoke with the President yesterday, and he said something that I had been urging: that there be a significant amount of humanitarian aid to help victims and innocent Palestinians who have nothing to do with Hamas. While I was abroad, I spoke with the Israeli leadership. Every single member we met with, we said we want to make sure you have what you need to eliminate the threat of Hamas, but we also reminded them that we must provide humanitarian assistance to those who need it, including innocent Palestinian citizens, in the fastest, safest, and most effective way possible. We are going to keep working to ensure that happens.

There are reports in Israel that Hamas was trying to block that aid in certain ways, block the highways that people drove down. Some told us that when Israeli soldiers were putting together water mains to bring water to some of the people, Hamas were shooting at them. But we must persist. We must be above the kind of evil cruelty that we saw from Hamas. We must go by the rule of law and make sure that we do everything we can to minimize the pain and loss of innocent civilians, Palestinians, and everyone else.

I thank my colleagues Senators ROSEN, KELLY, CASSIDY, and ROMNEY for joining on this bipartisan delegation. Our mission in Israel, as I said, was threefold: to send a clear message of solidarity, to assess what Israel's security needs are right now so we can put together a strong aid package, and show that support for Israel is bipartisan. Standing with the Israeli Government, as I mentioned, we got a list of what military assistance they need in order to fully defend themselves and eliminate the threat of Hamas.

Now, tomorrow, President Biden, too, will travel to Israel, to affirm—as only an American President can—that as long as there is a United States of America, Israel will never be alone.

I have known President Biden since he was Senator Biden and Vice President Biden and, now, President Biden. His support for Israel comes from the heart. He is a believer, and that is so good. And I know he will deliver a strong message of support and solidarity when he comes before the Jewish people.

And I know he will reiterate—as my colleagues and I did when meeting with each Israeli leader—the need to follow the laws of war and minimize civilian Palestinian deaths. This is very important, very important. And civilian casualties are something we stressed strongly when we spoke to Israeli leaders.

Now, make no mistake, the task Israel faces is so, so difficult. Eliminate the threat of Hamas—hard enough. Secure the return of hostages, safely, held by these evil, vicious, horrible terrorists. Cruel. And do so while minimizing the loss of innocent Palestinian lives. This is all not easy, but it is very important we make every effort to achieve all three.

And as we continue working with the Biden administration to stand Israel on the world stage, the Senate has a lot to do here at home. To move on a robust aid package quickly, I am instructing Senators MURRAY, REED, and CARDIN—our leading national security committee chairs—to work with our Republican colleagues and with the Biden administration on the details of an aid package that the Senate can take up as soon as possible, hopefully within the next few weeks. That package will include military aid, diplomatic help, humanitarian aid, and intelligence aid, all things Israel needs.

With the House in disarray, the Senate will not wait to vote on an Israeli aid package. We can't wait for the House. Who knows what is going to be happening there? The Senate will go first, and it is my hope that if the Senate can move quickly—and pass something with strong bipartisan support—we can importune the House to act, despite its current morass.

And very soon—perhaps as soon as today—I hope the Senate can also act to pass a 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 must speak in one voice against dangerous false equivalency between the evils of Hamas and the response against them.

Let us not forget that Hamas does not believe in any Jewish State. If you read some of their covenants and charters, Hamas would do to the Jewish people in the rest of Israel what they did to the people along the Gaza border. Israel therefore not only has the right but also the obligation to defend itself and its people, to eliminate the threat of Hamas, so they cannot carry out an attack, a vicious, cruel, heart-wrenching attack like this ever again.

And here in the Senate, we have to do our part to help them. So the next few weeks will bring great challenge not just for the Israeli people but for us here in America, as we maintain our resolve to help the Israelis.

The world, unfortunately, moves on quickly from tragedy. Some are already trying to move on from this tragedy, to obscure the nature of Hamas's horror, and undermine Israel's right to defend herself. But for all Israelis and for all supporters of Israel, across this country, Democrat, Republican, liberal, conservative, Jew, gentile, Muslim, Hindu, anybody, there cannot be any moving on from October 7. It is going to stay here, like a deep weight in our hearts.

We must not allow the atrocities of Hamas to fade into obscurity. If the world shakes its head and says, "Well, that was yesterday," then the horrors of Hamas are going to happen again. We have an obligation to ensure it doesn't happen. I will do everything possible to ensure the Senate acts as soon as possible.

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. McCONNELL. Mr. 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.

GOVERNMENT FUNDING

Mr. McCONNELL. Mr. President, one month from now, Congress will face another deadline to avoid a lapse in Federal Government funding.

Between now and then, the Senate needs to do our part to pass as many full-year appropriations bills as we possibly can. First in line is the minibus legislation that would send critical resources towards supporting America's farmers, keeping promises to our veterans, and rebuilding crumbling infrastructure.

Before the State work period, the Senate Republicans agreed on a list of amendments that would allow this package to move quickly here on the floor, and I am hopeful that the Democratic leader will call it up this week and give the full Senate the chance to take an important step toward funding the government.

Of course, passing the minibus is just an early step. We have a great deal of work still ahead of us to finish the job that Senator COLLINS, Senator MURRAY, and our colleagues on the Appropriations Committee have been focused on, literally, for months.

And as I have said before, we also need to consider additional, time-sensitive resources for a number of supplemental priorities. But we cannot get on with this work unless we clear an important hurdle this week.