

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.

ISRAEL

Mr. President, now, on a different matter, I was encouraged to hear that President Biden will visit Israel tomorrow. As the Jewish State mourns the victims of the barbaric October 7 attacks and as Israel forces continue their work to root out the terrorists responsible, it is important for the President to represent Israel's closest ally and bear witness to the destruction wrought by Hamas, Palestinian Islamic Jihad, and their patrons in Tehran. The President will have a number of responsibilities on this consequential trip.

First, he needs to console a grieving nation while demonstrating America's firm resolve to back Israel in its time of need.

The American people feel the pain of our friends in Israel, and we mourn our citizens—our own citizens—who were slaughtered alongside Israelis by these savages. In our grief and in our anger, America's interests and Israel's interests are truly intertwined, and our policies must be as well.

President Biden needs to demonstrate our support for the difficult but necessary steps Israel must take to destroy the terrorists' capacity to wage war. He needs to reject the false moral equivalence that Israeli's perennial critics are using to mask anti-Semitic hatred. He needs to resist the already mounting pressure in the media and in diplomatic channels to constrain Israel's efforts to defend itself.

He needs to make it clear that his administration will do everything possible to give Israel the time and the space that it needs to conduct the required military operations, for as long as it takes. As long as it takes.

In his words and actions, President Biden must also deter Iran and Hezbollah from further additional involvement in this terrorist war. The deployment of carrier battle groups, a marine expeditionary unit, and additional fighter squadrons to the region are a good first step. But deterrence requires both capabilities and credibility.

The President needs to show that he means business. His tone, his statements, and his actions need to send an unambiguous message to Iran about America's resolve. No more splitting hairs about whether intelligence demonstrates Iran's direct involvement in the October 7 attacks. The Supreme Leader has rejoiced at the images of dead Israelis.

A senior Iranian official called it "a proud operation," and Hamas has a history of thanking Iran for its support in public. No more absurd suggestions that seeking to free up \$6 billion in Iranian assets doesn't embolden Tehran.

We have reams—reams—of evidence that the regime that chants "Death to America" and "Death to Israel" puts its money where its mouth is. Ultimately, President Biden must also accept that the fundamental assumptions of his administration's Iran policy were morally and practically bankrupt.

The President's team begged Iran to reenter the Obama administration's flawed nuclear deal. Iran sensed their desperation and played hard to get.

Then the administration sought to deescalate tensions by overlooking Iranian plots against American citizens and former officials and ignoring Tehran's growing repression at home and aggression abroad.

Well, Iran had other ideas. They like killing Americans as much as they like killing Israelis. After all, the way that Tehran sees it, America is the Great Satan to Israel's "Little Satan." And we should expect that, until Iran's rulers are afraid of us, they will continue to undermine America's influence, to test our boundaries, and to kill our citizens.

The administration's previous Iran policy is now history. The President must go back to the drawing board and should start by doing what I have recommended to him since he took office: Work with Republicans to craft a bipartisan Iran policy that will survive his administration, a plan that addresses all aspects of the threat Iran poses, and, more immediately, the President needs to show Iran and its terrorist proxies like Hezbollah that further involvement in this conflict will risk crippling economic sanctions and the decisive use of American military strength.

The terrorists and their sponsors with Israeli and American blood on their hands represent a clear and present danger to the United States, to our allies, and our interests. It is long past time for America to meet this threat with serious and credible deterrence.

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. THUNE. 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.

Mr. THUNE. Mr. President, there are days and events that are almost unspeakable, and October 7, 2023, is one of them. The slaughter of hundreds of innocent Israelis—men, women, and, unthinkable, children—at the hands of Hamas terrorists was a terrible witness to the evil of which mankind is capable. The stories and images that have emerged are searing: a bloodied infant seat, parents tucking their 10-month-old twins into hiding before being murdered by the attackers, a mom and dad killed with their three young children.

As a father and a grandfather, I cannot imagine the terror those parents must have felt as they realized Hamas gunmen had moved into their villages. It is a terrible fact of war that the innocent are often drawn into the crossfire, but to make war on the innocent, to target the innocent deliberately, is perhaps the greatest evil of which man is capable.

Mr. President, it is nearly unimaginable to think that someone could look at Hamas's attack and find any cause for joy or celebration, and yet in the days following the attacks, we have seen far too many people right here at home—including at our so-called top universities—attempt to defend or even celebrate the indefensible. And while the First Amendment protects their right to speak, I hope that we as a society can categorically reject the view that anything can justify or excuse the deliberate murder of babies and children.

Mr. President, Israel is currently working to bring a swift end to Hamas's reign of terror, and it should have the full support of the United States in this mission. The United States has long provided security assistance to Israel, including an ongoing memorandum of understanding that supports foreign military financing and missile defense assistance through fiscal year 2028.

In 2021, we passed supplemental funding to restock the Iron Dome system in response to rocket attacks from Hamas, and I anticipate Congress will soon consider a supplemental in response to this attack. We must also use every resource available to prevent escalation and expansion of this war and ensure that Israel does not end up fighting on multiple fronts.

We can already see that other hostile actors are angling to enter the fray. Iran is actively threatening Israel. Hezbollah, which is backed by Iran, has fired rockets and artillery across Israel's northern border with Lebanon. And we need to band together with our allies to make it clear that any attempts to escalate this war would be a grave miscalculation.

It is also past time to hold Iran—a long-time funder of Hamas, Hezbollah, and other terrorist organizations—to account for its role in fomenting unrest and destabilizing the Middle East. I have not been shy about calling out the Biden administration's poor track record on being tough on Iran, in particular, the administration's misguided goal of re-signing a flawed nuclear deal and attempting to appease the country's leaders with billions of dollars in sanctions relief.

Just over a month ago—on September 11 of all days—the administration lifted a freeze on \$6 billion in Iranian assets, which would likely have resulted in the freeing up of additional funds for Iran's hostile activities. I am glad that the President listened to calls from Senator BLACKBURN, me, and others to block Iran's access to these funds, and I hope that the Senate can soon pass legislation to permanently freeze these assets. We need to make it very clear to Iran—and to any other country that would seek to imitate the Iranians—that there will be consequences for aiding and abetting terror.

Mr. President, 30 Americans have now been confirmed to have died in