

ORDER FOR ADJOURNMENT

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, if there is no further business to come before the Senate, I ask that it stand adjourned under the previous order, following the remarks of Senator SANDERS.

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

The Senator from Vermont.

ISRAEL

Mr. SANDERS. Mr. President, I rise to say a few words about the awful situation in the Middle East. As you know and the American people know, there have been five wars—five wars—in the last 15 years between Israel and Hamas.

How do we end the current one and prevent a sixth war from happening sooner or later? How do we balance our desire to stop the fighting with the need to address the root causes of this conflict?

And here is the sad truth—and it really is a very sad truth. For 75 years, diplomats, well-intentioned Israelis and Palestinians, and government leaders all over the world, including Presidents of the United States, have struggled to bring peace to this region. And during that time, among many other things, an Egyptian President and an Israeli Prime Minister were assassinated by extremists.

Do you know why? Because they tried to bring peace to the region. This is an incredibly difficult and complicated issue, and nobody has any simple solution to it.

As one of the first Members of Congress to call for a humanitarian pause to the bombing, I have been very encouraged to see that pause finally happen over the last 5 days and to see its extension earlier this week. That is a very positive development.

This temporary cease-fire has brought some relief to Gaza and to the families of the more than 100 hostages released so far. The break in fighting has let an average of 200 trucks per day to enter Gaza, carrying desperately needed food, water, medical supplies, and the fuel necessary to distribute aid, pump water, and run hospitals and bakeries.

While this is only 40 percent—and people must recognize this, before the war, there were 500 trucks coming in a day, and now, there are 200—it is still a very substantial improvement over where we were a few weeks ago.

It seems to me that our job now is to keep working to extend this window further and to get more aid in and to get more hostages out—more aid in, more hostages out. Right now, critical talks are under way that will hopefully provide the United Nations the time it needs to establish a sustained humanitarian operation that can meet people's basic needs and provide shelter and medical care. And let us be clear: The needs in Gaza are beyond enormous.

For those of us who want not only to bring this war to an end but to avoid future ones, we must first be clear-eyed about the facts. On October 7, Hamas—a terrorist organization—unleashed a brutal attack against Israel, killing about 1,200 innocent men, women, and children and taking more than 200 hostages.

No one—no one—in the U.S. Senate, no one in Congress, denies that Israel has the right to respond to that murderous attack. Unfortunately, however, under the leadership of its rightwing Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, who is under indictment for corruption and whose Cabinet includes outright racists, Israel unleashed what amounts to almost total war against the Palestinian people.

Israel's widespread bombing has left nearly 15,000 people dead—that is in a 7-week period—15,000 people dead, two-thirds of whom are women and children. And tens of thousands of others were wounded.

Israel's military campaign, up to this point, according to U.N. estimates, damaged or destroyed 45 percent of the housing in Gaza—45 percent—and displaced nearly 1.8 million people. The Israeli attacks, up to this point, have killed 109 United Nations workers and left millions of Gazans on the brink of starvation, lacking medical care, electricity, or fuel.

This is a humanitarian catastrophe that risks, among other things, igniting a wider regional conflagration. We all want this horror to end as soon as possible. To make progress, however, we must grapple with the complexity of this situation.

First, Hamas has made it clear, before and after—their October 7 attack that its goal is perpetual warfare and the destruction of the State of Israel. Several weeks ago, a spokesman for Hamas told the New York Times:

I hope that the state of war with Israel will become permanent on all the borders, and that the Arab world will stand with us.

Let me repeat it. This is the Hamas spokesman:

I hope that the state of war with Israel will become permanent on all the borders and that the Arab world will stand with us.

So that is the first point.

The second point is that, if we go back a little bit in history, we understand that Israel has done nothing in recent years to give hope for a peaceful settlement—maintaining the blockade of Gaza, deepening the daily humiliations of occupation in the West Bank, and largely ignoring the horrendous living conditions facing Palestinians. Massive poverty existed in Gaza before October 7. Something like 70 percent of the young people in Gaza were unemployed.

How is that for a reality in terms of despair and hopelessness? Those are the conditions that existed before the Israeli attack.

Needless to say, I do not have all of the answers to this never-ending tragedy. But for those of us who believe in

peace and for those of us who believe in justice, it is imperative that we do our best to provide Israelis and Palestinians with a thoughtful response that maps out a realistic path to addressing the reality we face today.

Let me just give you a few of my thoughts as to the best way forward and how the United States can rally the world around a moral position that moves us toward peace in the region and justice for an oppressed Palestinian population.

To start with, in my view, we must demand an immediate end to Israel's indiscriminate bombing, which is causing and has caused an enormous number of civilian casualties and is in violation of international law.

The main point here is: Israel is at war with Hamas, not with the Palestinian people. Israel cannot bomb an entire neighborhood just to take out one Hamas lieutenant. That is simply not acceptable and not something the United States should be complicit with.

Further, we must extend the humanitarian pause that exists right now so that the United Nations has the time to safely set up the distribution network needed to prevent thirst, starvation, and disease, to build shelters, and to evacuate those who need critical care.

Once again, we are looking at an unimaginable humanitarian crisis, and the U.N. is going to need as much time as it can get to try to help people in desperate need. This window will also allow for talks to free as many hostages as possible. And I think we all would like to see every hostage returned to their loved ones. This extended pause must not precede a resumption of a discriminate bombing. Israel will continue to go after Hamas, but it must dramatically change its tactics to minimize civilian harm.

If long-suffering Palestinians are ever going to have a chance at self-determination and a decent standard of living, there must be no long-term Israeli reoccupation and blockade of Gaza. If Hamas is going to be removed from power—as they must be—and Palestinians given the opportunity for a better life, an Israeli occupation of Gaza would be absolutely counterproductive and would benefit Hamas. Imagine Israeli soldiers all over an occupied Gaza. For the sake of regional peace and a brighter future for the Palestinian people, Gaza must have a chance to be free of Hamas. There can be no long-term Israeli occupation.

To achieve the political transformation that Gaza needs—and Gaza desperately needs a political transformation—new Palestinian leadership will be required as part of a wider political process. And for that transformation and peace process to take place, Israel must make political commitments that will allow for Palestinian leadership committed to peace to build support. What I think people all over the world want to see and what

the people of Gaza want to see is leadership that will take care of their needs, provide for them, allow them self-determination, not leadership in perpetual warfare with Israel.

Israel must also guarantee displaced Palestinians the absolute right to return to their homes as Gaza rebuilds. And I am very concerned by some of the remarks we hear from Israel, from some Israeli leadership, questioning that basic right of people to return to their communities.

People who have lived in poverty and despair for years, as people in Gaza have, cannot be made permanently homeless. Israel must also commit to end the killings of Palestinians in the West Bank and freeze settlements there as a first step to permanently ending the occupation.

Those steps will show that peace can deliver for the Palestinian people, hopefully giving the Palestinian Authority the legitimacy it needs to assume administrative control of Gaza, likely after an interim stabilization period under an international force.

Finally, if Palestinians are to have any hope for a decent future, there must be a commitment to broad peace talks to advance a new two-state solution in the wake of this war.

The United States, the international community, and Israel's neighbors must move aggressively toward that two-state goal. This would include dramatically increased international support for the Palestinian people, including from wealthy Gulf States. It would also mean the promise of full recognition of Palestine pending the formation of a new democratically elected government committed to peace with Israel.

Let us be clear—and I think this is the main point that I want to make this evening—that we should be clear that all of this is not going to happen on its own. Left alone, sad to say, Israel is not going to bring this about.

Prime Minister Netanyahu's Likud Party was explicitly formed on the premise that "between the Sea and the Jordan [River] there will only be Israeli sovereignty." And the current coalition agreement reinforces that goal. This is not just ideology. This idea that Israel has the right to control everything between the sea and the Jordan River, that is just not ideology. The Israeli Government has systematically pursued this goal.

The last year saw record Israeli settlement growth in the West Bank where more than 700,000 Israelis now live in areas that the United Nations and the United States agree are occupied territories. They have used state violence to back up this de facto annexation.

Sadly, tragically, since October 7, the United Nations reports that at least 208 Palestinians, including 53 children, have been killed by Israeli security forces and settlers. This cannot be allowed to continue.

Mr. Netanyahu has made clear where he stands on these critical issues. Now

is the time for us to make clear where we stand on these issues. And the truth is that if asking nicely worked, we wouldn't be in the position we are today. Asking nicely just is not going to bring about the kinds of changes that are needed.

The only way these vital and necessary changes will occur is if the United States uses the substantial leverage we have with Israel, and we all know what that leverage is. For many years, the United States has provided Israel with substantial sums of money, with close to no strings attached. Currently, we provide \$3.8 billion a year to Israel, no strings attached.

President Biden has asked for \$14.3 billion more on top of that sum and asked Congress to waive normal, already limited oversight rules. This blank check approach must end. The United States must make clear that while we are friends of Israel, there are conditions to that friendship and that we cannot be complicit in actions that violate international law and our own sense of decency. That includes an end to indiscriminate bombing, a significant pause to the bombing so that massive humanitarian assistance can come into the region, the right of displaced Gazans to return to their homes, no long-term Israeli occupation of Gaza, an end to settler violence in the West Bank and a freeze on settlement expansion, and maybe, most importantly, a commitment to broad peace talks for a two-state solution in the wake of this war.

Over the years, people of good will around the world, including Israelis and Palestinians, have tried to address this conflict in a way that brings justice to the Palestinians and security for Israel. Israel is entitled to security, to be free of terrorist attacks.

Now, I and some other Members of Congress have tried over the years to do what we could. Obviously, painfully, we did not do enough. Now, we must recommit to this effort. The stakes are just too high to give up. It is clear that Netanyahu and his extreme rightwing government are not going to do this on their own, which is why the United States must use its leverage to force these necessary changes and push hard for a wider political process that leads to a two-state solution.

These should be the conditions of our solidarity, including in the supplemental spending bill, which we will soon be considering.

Israel is a longtime friend and ally of the United States, and I respect that, but when there is this level of destruction and bloodshed and when tens of billions of dollars have been requested, it is more than reasonable for the United States to have a say in where our taxpayer dollars go and how they are spent. This is money that comes from the taxpayers of the United States.

Israel has an absolute right to defend itself, but it does not have the right to use American taxpayer funds in viola-

tion of international law or with little regard for civilian casualties. Now, I know that when we use the word "conditioning," people become very alarmed. Oh my God, terrible idea. Virtually every dollar that we appropriate has conditions attached to it. If you are on food stamps tonight, you have got conditions. If you are on unemployment, you have got conditions. If you are on section 8 housing, you have conditions. We have conditions on everything. We don't give away money. We say you have to be eligible for it; this is what you have got to do; these are the requirements. That is conditioning.

Conditioning, in fact, has been, for a long time, seen as a key to U.S. policy regarding foreign governments, including Israel, not a new idea. The United States has routinely conditioned aid on countries, including Ukraine, Saudi Arabia, and Egypt, to name a few. Presidents Carter, Reagan, H. W. Bush, and Clinton, all conditioned aid to Israel to secure changes in their policies.

President Reagan actually suspended certain arms deliveries and threatened to stop all military aid due to Israel's war in Lebanon. That is a condition, a pretty strong condition. Sending \$14.3 billion to Netanyahu's government on top of the \$3.8 billion we provide every year and the billions of arms the United States has already provided with no strings attached would be a huge mistake, out of step with longstanding U.S. policy, and not something I believe that the American people want to see.

I have laid out what I believe some of these conditions should be, and that is an end to the indiscriminate bombing that we have seen, a guarantee that displaced Palestinians will have the right to return to their homes, no long-term occupation or blockade of Gaza, a freeze on the West Bank settlements there, and a commitment to broad peace talks for a two-state solution.

Those are some of the conditions that I think we have more than a right to demand when we provide money to Israel.

Finally, let me end this on a personal note. There is no question that people all over this country have strong disagreements on the war and some of the issues that I have been discussing tonight, and that is what is part of the democratic process. And in a democracy like ours, it is natural that these issues be debated, and people have different points of view.

But what we cannot do, under any circumstances, is turn to violence because of our differences—not to violence and not to bigotry. And I have to say that, tragically, in my home State of Vermont, in the city that I live, a city of 40,000 people, Burlington, VT, we have experienced this form of violent hate.

And just as I am sure you know, 3 days ago, three young men, lovely young men going to college, celebrating Thanksgiving in Burlington,

VT, were shot, and one of them is in very serious condition. So as we all hope and pray for the recovery of Hisham and Kinnan and Tahseen, the three young men who were shot, and we await the findings of the investigation into this terrible act, let me say this again loudly and clearly: Hate has no place in my State of Vermont or anyplace else in America. With Islamophobia, anti-Arab hate, anti-Semitism, and racism on the rise in this country, we must—must—come together and remain resolute in our commitment to fighting all forms of bigotry and intolerance.

I yield the floor.

ADJOURNMENT UNTIL 10 A.M. TOMORROW

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate stands adjourned until 10 a.m. tomorrow.

Thereupon, the Senate, at 7:58 p.m., adjourned until Thursday, November 30, 2023, at 10 a.m.

CONFIRMATIONS

Executive nominations confirmed by the Senate November 29, 2023:

DEPARTMENT OF STATE

ANN MARIE YASTISHOCK, OF PENNSYLVANIA, 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 INDEPENDENT

STATE OF PAPUA NEW GUINEA, AND TO SERVE CONCURRENTLY AND WITHOUT ADDITIONAL COMPENSATION AS AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE SOLOMON ISLANDS AND AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF VANUATU.

HEATHER ROACH VARIAVA, OF IOWA, 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 LAO PEOPLE'S DEMOCRATIC REPUBLIC.

VERNELLE TRIM FITZPATRICK, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE GABONESE REPUBLIC.

KARA C. McDONALD, OF VIRGINIA, A CAREER MEMBER OF THE SENIOR FOREIGN SERVICE, CLASS OF COUNSELOR, TO BE AMBASSADOR EXTRAORDINARY AND PLENIPOTENTIARY OF THE UNITED STATES OF AMERICA TO THE REPUBLIC OF LITHUANIA.

THE JUDICIARY

JAMEL SEMPER, OF NEW JERSEY, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF NEW JERSEY.

MICAH W.J. SMITH, OF HAWAII, TO BE UNITED STATES DISTRICT JUDGE FOR THE DISTRICT OF HAWAII.

AUTHORITY FOR COMMITTEES TO MEET

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I have six requests for committees to meet during today's session of the Senate. They have the approval of the Majority and Minority Leaders.

Pursuant to rule XXVI, paragraph 5(a), of the Standing Rules of the Senate, the following committees are authorized to meet during today's session of the Senate:

COMMITTEE ON ARMED SERVICES

The Committee on Armed Services is authorized to meet in closed session

during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 9:30 a.m.

COMMITTEE ON ENVIRONMENT AND PUBLIC WORKS

The Committee on Environment and Public Works is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

The Committee on Foreign Relations is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a classified briefing.

COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY AND GOVERNMENTAL AFFAIRS

The Committee on Homeland Security and Governmental Affairs is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing.

COMMITTEE ON THE JUDICIARY

The Committee on the Judiciary is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 10 a.m., to conduct a hearing on nominations.

SELECT COMMITTEE ON INTELLIGENCE

The Select Committee on Intelligence is authorized to meet during the session of the Senate on Wednesday, November 29, 2023, at 2:30 p.m., to conduct a closed briefing.