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House of Representatives

The House was not in session today. Its next meeting will be held on Friday, March 15, 2024, at 11 a.m.

Senate

THURSDAY, MARCH 14, 2024

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.

Eternal God, who sustains those who obey You, You have been good to us beyond our deserving. You have surrounded us with the beauties of the Earth and the glories of the skies. Today, make us alert to Your providential movements. If our minds are closed to Your truth, open them. If our hearts are hardened, soften them. If our ears are deaf to the cries of the oppressed, unstop them.

Lord, revive our Senators. Give them a desire to establish new thresholds of hope, peace, and freedom in our Nation and world. Be near to our lawmakers all their days. May they rest in the green pastures of your peace and thrive beside the still waters of Your wisdom.

We pray in Your mighty Name. Amen.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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

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

APPOINTMENT OF ACTING PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE

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

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the following letter:

U.S. SENATE,
PRESIDENT PRO TEMPORE,
Washington, DC, March 14, 2024.

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 ses-

sion to consider the following nomination which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Dennis B. Hankins, of Minnesota, 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 Republic of Haiti.

RECOGNITION OF THE MAJORITY LEADER

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

ISRAEL

Mr. SCHUMER. Mr. President, I rise to speak today about what I believe can and should be the path forward to secure mutual peace and lasting prosperity for Israelis and Palestinians. I speak for myself, but I also speak for so many mainstream Jewish Americans, a silent majority whose nuanced views on the matter have never been well-represented in this country's discussions about the war in Gaza.

My last name is SCHUMER, which derives from the Hebrew word "shomer" or guardian. Of course, my first responsibility is to America and to New York. But as the first Jewish majority leader of the U.S. Senate and the highest ranking Jewish elected official in America ever, I also feel very keenly my responsibility as a "Shomer Yisreol"—a guardian of the people of Israel.

Throughout Jewish history, there have been many shomrim and plenty who are far greater than I claim to be. But, nonetheless, this is the position in which I find myself now—at a time of

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



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great difficulty for the State of Israel, for the Jewish people, and for non-Jewish friends of Israel. So I feel an immense obligation to speak and to act.

I speak as a member of a community of Jewish Americans that I know very well. They are my family, my friends. Many of them are my constituents. Many of them are Democrats, and many are deeply concerned about the pursuit of justice, both in New York and around the globe. From the Talmud—"Tikkun Olam," the call to "repair the world"—has driven Jews around the globe to do what is right.

We love Israel in our bones. What Israel has meant to my generation within living memory of the Holocaust is impossible to measure. The flowering of the Jewish people in the desert, from the ashes of the Holocaust and the fulfillment of the dream of a Jewish homeland after nearly 2,000 years of praying and waiting represents one of the most heartfelt causes of my life. And unlike some younger Americans, I remember how hard it was to achieve that dream. I remember clutching my transistor radio to my ear in James Madison High School, 1967, during the Six-Day War, wondering if Israel would be pushed into the sea.

If the events of the last few months have made anything clear, it is that Israel is surrounded by vicious enemies, and there are many people around the world who excuse and even support their aims to expel and kill Jews living in their hard-won land of refuge.

I will never underestimate the grave threats Israel faces and has faced for the entirety of its existence, nor will I ever underestimate the oppression the Jewish people have endured for millennia.

It is precisely out of that longstanding connection to and concern for the state of the people of Israel that I speak today about what I view are the most pressing existential threats to Israel's long-term peace and prosperity.

After 5 months of suffering on both sides of this conflict, our thinking must turn urgently to how we can achieve lasting peace and ensure prosperity and security for both the Jewish people and the Palestinian people in the Middle East.

I believe that to achieve that lasting peace, which we so long for, Israel must make some significant course corrections, which I will outline in this speech.

But, first, let's not forget how we arrived at this critical moment. What Hamas did on October 7 was brutal beyond imagination. I have sat with the families of those killed in the assault. I have seen the footage and heard the stories of innocents murdered and raped and of heartless cruelty. And as long as I live, I will never forget these images—this pure and premeditated evil.

Many of my family members were killed by Nazis in the Holocaust. Octo-

ber 7 and the shameless response to support that terrorist attack by some in America and around the globe have awakened the deepest fears of the Jewish people: that our annihilation remains a possibility. Today, over 130 hostages remain captive in Gaza. I am anguished by the plight of so many hostages still being trapped deep inside Hamas's network of tunnels. I pray for them and for their families who have inspired me with their tenacious advocacy to ensure their loved ones are not forgotten. Many of them are Americans: Jonathan Dekel-Chen, Hersh Goldberg-Polin; and some are my constituents in New York: Omer Neutra, Keith Siegel, and Itay Chen, who we tragically learned this week was brutally killed on October 7 while serving near the Gaza border. Hamas still holds his body. His father gave me this pin, which I am wearing in remembrance of him. As well as those of Americans Judi Weinstein and Gad Haggai.

I have sat with many of these families. I have wept with them. Each day that their loved ones don't come home carries enough anguish and grief to last a lifetime.

I am working in every way I can to support the Biden administration's negotiations to continue to free every last one of the hostages. I urge every actor at the table—the Israelis, the Biden administration, the Qataris, the Egyptians, and anybody else at the table—to continue doing everything possible to get a deal. Hamas has been given a deal already. They should say yes. It is no time to waste.

My heart also breaks at the loss of so many civilian lives in Gaza. I am anguished that the Israeli war campaign has killed so many innocent Palestinians. I know that my fellow Jewish Americans feel the same anguish when they see the images of dead and starving children and destroyed homes.

Gaza is experiencing a humanitarian catastrophe—entire families wiped out, whole neighborhoods reduced to rubble, mass displacement, children suffering.

We should not let the complexities of this conflict stop us from stating the plain truth: Palestinian civilians do not deserve to suffer for the sins of Hamas, and Israel has a moral obligation to do better. The United States has an obligation to do better. I believe the United States must provide robust humanitarian aid to Gaza and pressure the Israelis to let more of it get through to the people who need it.

Jewish people throughout the centuries have empathized with those who are suffering and who are oppressed because we have known so much of that ourselves. As the Torah teaches us, every human life is precious; every single innocent life lost, whether Israeli or Palestinian, is a tragedy that, as the Scripture says, "destroys an entire world."

What horrifies so many Jews especially is our sense that Israel is falling short of upholding these distinctly Jewish values that we hold so dear. We

must be better than our enemies, lest we become them.

Israel has a fundamental right to defend itself, but as I have said from the beginning of this war, how it exercises that right matters. Israel must prioritize the protection of civilian casualties when identifying military targets. I have repeatedly called upon the Israeli government to do so.

But it also must be said that Israel is, by no means, the only one responsible for the immense civilian toll. To blame only Israel for the deaths of Palestinians is unfair, one-sided, and often deliberately manipulative. And it ignores Hamas's role in this conflict.

Hamas has knowingly invited an immense civilian toll during this war. Their goal on October 7 was to provoke a tough response from Israel by killing as many Jews as possible in the most vicious manner possible—by raping women, executing babies, desecrating bodies, brutalizing whole communities.

Since then, Hamas has heartlessly hidden behind their fellow Palestinians by turning hospitals into command centers and refugee camps into missile-launching sites. It is well documented that Hamas soldiers use innocent Gazans as human shields. The leaders of Hamas, many of whom live lives of luxury in places far away from the poverty and misfortune of Gaza, do not care one iota about the Palestinians for whom they claim to nobly fight.

It bothers me deeply that most media outlets covering this war and many protesters opposing it have placed the blame for civilian casualties entirely on Israel. All too often in the media and at protests, it is never noted that Hamas has gone to great lengths to make themselves inseparable from the civilian population of Gaza by using Palestinians as human shields. Too many news agencies, television stations, and newspapers give Hamas a pass by hardly ever discovering the shameful practice that is central to their fighting strategy.

And this has led to an inaccurate perception of the harsh realities of this war. I believe stories that justifiably mention loss of innocent Palestinian life should also note how Hamas uses civilians as human shields. It almost never happens.

And I believe that every protest that justifiably decries the loss of innocent Palestinian women, men, children should also denounce Hamas for their central role in the bloodshed. When protesters decry the loss of Palestinian life but never condemn this perfidy, or the loss of Israeli lives, it confounds and deeply troubles the vast majority of Jewish and non-Jewish Americans alike who support the State of Israel.

Given that Hamas launched their attacks on October 7 to provoke Israel, given that Hamas sought the ensuing civilian toll in Gaza, given that Hamas wanted both Israelis and Arabs to be at each others' throats, tensions on both sides have dramatically intensified.

And, now, as a result of those inflamed tensions in both Israeli and Palestinian communities, people on all sides of this war are turning away from a two-state solution, including Israel's Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who in recent weeks has said out loud repeatedly what many have long suspected by outright rejecting the idea of Palestinian statehood and sovereignty.

As the highest ranking Jewish elected official in our government and as a staunch defender of Israel, I rise today to say unequivocally: This is a grave mistake for Israel, for Palestinians, for the region, and for the world.

The only real and sustainable solution to this decades-old conflict is a negotiated two-state solution, a demilitarized Palestinian State living side by side with Israel in equal measures of peace, security, prosperity, dignity, and mutual recognition.

Both Jews and Palestinians have long historic claims to this land. Contrary to the unfounded, absurd, and offensive claims by some that the Jewish people are "colonizers" in their ancestral homeland, Jewish people have lived in the Holy Land continuously for more than three millennia—3,000 years.

For centuries, Jews have made aliyah and gone to the land of Israel to live and settle. For centuries, at Passover, Jews at every corner of the globe have prayed: "Next year in Jerusalem."

A Jewish homeland in Israel is no 20th-century contrivance. Israel is our historic home, a home for people oppressed for centuries.

Now, the Palestinians too have lived on the land for generations, and, in past centuries, they have formed their own distinct culture, identity, cuisine, and literature. The idea espoused by some that "there is no such thing as Palestinians" is inaccurate, offensive, unhelpful.

The only just solution to this predicament is one in which each people can flourish in their own state, side by side. But for a two-state solution to work over the long term, it has to include real and meaningful compromises by both sides.

For example, too many Israelis who say they want a two-state solution don't acknowledge how the amount and extent of expanding settlements renders that a virtual impossibility. And too many Palestinians who say they want a two-state solution don't acknowledge how their insistence on an unequivocal "right of return" is a fatal impediment to progress. Both ways of thinking are impeding the peace process.

And there are others on the left who view a two-state solution with skepticism as an ideal that will never happen, a far-off goal that allows for the continuation of the status quo in Gaza and the West Bank, where Palestinians face unique obstacles compared to their Israeli counterparts. As a result, they reject a two-state solution in favor of one state, where Palestinians and Israelis would supposedly live in democratic peace, side by side.

I can understand the idealism that inspires so many young people, in particular, to support a one-state solution. Why can't we all live side by side and house by house in peace? I count at least two reasons why this wouldn't work and why it is unacceptable to most Jewish people.

First, this combined state could take an extreme turn politically, putting Jewish Israelis in peril. This state would be majority Palestinian, and, in the past, some Palestinians have voted to empower groups like Hamas, which seeks to eradicate the Jewish people.

It is longstanding American policy to support democracy overseas, but in this hypothetical single state, democracy could cost Israeli Jews their safety if extremists were to take control of this new state of affairs to ultimately achieve their true aim: the violent expulsion of Jews from the Holy Land.

Now, this is no abstract fear. Thousands of years of Jewish history show that when things go badly, the people of the country in which Jews live, even in a democracy, all too often turn on them as convenient scapegoats.

There is no guarantee this wouldn't happen again in a single Israeli-Palestinian state. To have Palestinian voters be the protectors of Israeli Jews would be a bridge too far to accept.

Second, and even more important, the Jewish people have a right to their own state. It is so troubling to me that many people, especially on the left, seem to acknowledge and even celebrate this right to statehood for every group but the Jews.

If a national homeland for all peoples of the world has been the driving goal of the anticolonial movement of the last century, then why are only Jews seemingly penalized for this aspiration?

Jews have a human right to their own state, just as any other people do, Palestinians included.

As I have said, there are also some Israelis who oppose even a two-state solution, with a demilitarized Palestinian State, because they fear that it might tolerate or be a harbor for further terrorism against a Jewish State.

I understand these fears, but the bitter reality is that a single state, controlled by Israel, which they advocate, guarantees certain war forever and further isolation of the Jewish community in the world, to the extent that its future would be jeopardized.

Let me elaborate. They say the definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over and expecting a different result. If Israel were to not only maintain the status quo but to go beyond that and tighten its control over Gaza and the West Bank, as some in the current Netanyahu administration have suggested—in effect, creating a de facto single state—then what reasonable expectation can we have that Hamas and their allies will lay down their arms? It would mean constant war.

On top of that, Israel moving closer to a single state entirely under its con-

trol would further rupture its relationship with the rest of the world, including the United States. Support for Israel has declined worldwide in the last few months, and this trend will only get worse if the Israeli Government continues to follow its current path.

I appreciate that so many Israelis cannot contemplate the possibility of two states right now because they remain so traumatized and so angry by what Hamas did on October 7—the brutality, the viciousness, the sexual assault, the imprisonment, and the abuse of hundreds of hostages. I am, of course, sympathetic to this point of view. I am upset; I am angry, too.

We will never forget what happened on October 7. But even while we carry that anguish in our hearts, we have to think ahead to the future—the medium, the long term—how we can ensure that something like October 7 never happens again. We cannot let anger or trauma determine our actions or cloud our judgment.

A two-state solution may feel daunting, especially now, but I believe it is the only realistic and sustainable solution—on the basis of security, on the basis of prosperity, on the basis of fundamental human rights and dignity.

But in order to achieve a two-state solution, the reality is that things must change. Right now, there are four—four—major obstacles standing in the way of two states, and until they are removed from the equation, there will never be peace in Israel and Gaza and the West Bank.

The four major obstacles are Hamas and the Palestinians who support and tolerate their evil ways, radical right-wing Israelis in government and society, Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas, and Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu. I will explain each in detail.

The first major obstacle to peace is Hamas and the Palestinians who support and tolerate their evil ways. Hamas is for the destruction of Israel, and, in past decades, it undermined any hope for peace at every turn.

It was Hamas who began its vicious campaign of suicide bombings against innocent Israelis to derail the nascent peace process in Oslo. It was Hamas who assassinated more moderate Palestinian political representatives in Gaza in 2007. It is Hamas who has held Gaza under repressive, undemocratic rule for close to two decades. And it is Hamas who targeted those brave Gazans who have spoken out against its actions or tried to bridge the divide between Israelis and Palestinians.

Jewish Americans and Israelis alike have been appalled and hurt at efforts to rebrand Hamas, which is designated by the United States as a terrorist organization, as noble resistance or freedom fighters. Attempts to excuse their horrific actions against both Israelis and Palestinians are morally repugnant.

A permanent ceasefire, effective immediately, would only allow Hamas to

regroup and launch further attacks on Israeli civilians. There can never be a two-state solution if Hamas has any significant power.

However, a temporary ceasefire, such as President Biden has proposed, which would allow for the return of hostages and humanitarian relief for suffering Palestinians, is quite different and is something I support.

But any proposal that leaves Hamas with meaningful power is unacceptable to me and most Israelis. So it goes without saying that Hamas cannot have any role in a future Gaza, if we are to achieve peace.

The same goes for the minority of Palestinians who support Hamas and those who demonstrate other forms of extremism, even if they are not card-carrying members—the Gazans who ventured into Israeli territory on October 7 to loot and pillage, the people in the West Bank who flooded the streets and cheered from afar the cold-blooded killing of mothers and children.

This is appalling behavior, and while it may fall short of terrorism, it has no place in a peaceful future for Israel and Palestinians, and it ought to be denounced by the Palestinian public and their leaders who believe in a more sustainable future beyond the cycle of revenge.

The second major obstacle to peace is radical, rightwing Israelis in government and society. The worst examples of this radicalism are Finance Minister Bezalel Smotrich and Ministry of National Security Itamar Ben Gvir.

Minister Smotrich has in the past openly called for the subjugation and forced displacement of all Palestinians in the West Bank. In the current crisis, he has used inflammatory rhetoric and called for punitive restrictions on Palestinian farmers in the West Bank during the olive harvest. He has prevented the transfer of funds to the Palestinian Authority, and he has opposed the provision of any humanitarian assistance to Gaza, going so far as to stop agreed-upon shipments of flour.

Minister Ben Gvir is no better. When he was a young man, he was barred from the Israeli military service for his extremist views. Last year, in a move only intended to antagonize the Muslim population, he visited the Temple Mount with his supporters, as a brazen show of force toward Palestinians. And during this current conflict, he has facilitated the mass distribution of guns to far-right settlers, exacerbating instability, fueling violence.

There is a nastiness to what Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir believe and how they use their positions of authority and influence, an eagerness to inflame and provoke that is profoundly irresponsible and self-destructive.

In my conversations with Israeli leaders, I have urged them to do more, to clamp down on the unacceptable vigilante settler violence in the West Bank. And I have supported the Biden administration's efforts to impose consequences for extremist settler violence.

But the unfortunate reality is that this violence is openly supported by Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir, and as long as they hold their positions of power, no true progress will be made.

While not equivalent, extremist Palestinians and extremist Israelis seek the same goal, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea, they aim to push the other from the land. Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir may not say they want to kill all Palestinians outright, but they are clear in their desire to displace them from their homes and replace them with Israeli settlers. This is also abhorrent. As long as these two hold their positions of power, peace will be difficult, if not impossible, to achieve.

The third major obstacle to peace is the President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, who is beholden to his narrow political interests, to the detriment of both the West Bank and Gaza. Over the years, President Abbas has evaded the democratic process, declining to hold future elections for over a decade and failing to empower future leadership. Despite his long tenure leading the Palestinian Authority, he has achieved few of his self-proclaimed goals.

The Palestinian Authority remains corrupt and continues to incite instability through the martyr payment system. Palestinians are no more prosperous, no safer, no freer than they were when Abbas first took power. As a result, President Abbas has lost the trust of the Palestinian people.

Furthermore, he is a terrible role model and spiritual leader. In the past, he has participated in outright Holocaust denial, attempting to justify Nazi actions. This embrace of anti-Semitism extended to his refusal for weeks to condemn the loss of Israeli civilian life on October 7.

Should Abbas remain, Palestinian people can have no assurance that a Palestinian State would be able to ensure their safety or prosperity, nor can they have any belief that the government would be free of corruption.

For there to be any hope of peace in the future, Abbas must step down and be replaced by a new generation of Palestinian leaders who will work towards attaining peace with the Jewish State. Otherwise, the West Bank will continue to suffer, and Hamas or some similarly extreme organization will continue to maintain a foothold in Gaza.

The Palestinian Authority, under new leadership, must undertake a reform process and emerge as a revitalized PA that can viably serve as the basis for a Palestinian State with the trust of the Palestinian people.

The fourth major obstacle to peace is Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu, who has all too frequently bowed to the demands of extremists like Minister Smotrich and Ben Gvir and the settlers in the West Bank.

I have known Prime Minister Netanyahu for a very long time. While

we have vehemently disagreed on many occasions, I will always respect his extraordinary bravery for Israel on the battlefield as a younger man. I believe in his heart he has as his highest priority the security of Israel.

However, I also believe Prime Minister Netanyahu has lost his way by allowing his political survival to take precedence over the best interests of Israel. He has put himself in coalition with far-right extremists like Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir, and as a result, he has been too willing to tolerate the civilian toll in Gaza, which is pushing support for Israel worldwide to historic lows. Israel cannot survive if it becomes a pariah.

Prime Minister Netanyahu has also weakened Israel's political and moral fabric through his attempt to co-opt the judiciary, and he has shown zero interest in doing the courageous and visionary work required to pave the way for peace, even before this present conflict.

As a lifelong supporter of Israel, it has become clear to me that the Netanyahu coalition no longer fits the needs of Israel after October 7. The world has changed radically since then, and the Israeli people are being stifled right now by a governing vision that is stuck in the past.

Nobody expects Prime Minister Netanyahu to do the things that must be done to break the cycle of violence, to preserve Israel's credibility on the world stage, and to work towards a two-state solution. If he were to disavow Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir and kick them out of his governing coalition, that would be a real meaningful step forward, but regrettably there is no reason to believe Prime Minister Netanyahu would do that. He won't disavow Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir in their calls for Israelis to drive Palestinians out of Gaza and the West Bank. He won't commit to a military operation in Rafah that prioritizes protecting civilian life. He won't engage responsibly in discussions about a day-after plan for Gaza and a longer term pathway to peace.

Hamas and the Palestinians who support and tolerate their evil ways; radical, rightwing Israelis in government and society; President Abbas; Prime Minister Netanyahu—these are the four obstacles to peace. If we fail to overcome them, then Israel and the West Bank and Gaza will be trapped in the same violent state of affairs they have experienced for the last 75 years.

These obstacles are not the same in their culpability for the present state of affairs, but arguing over which is the worst stymies our ability to achieve peace. Given the complexity and gravity of this undertaking, many different groups—many different groups—have a responsibility to see it through.

The Palestinian people must reject Hamas and the extremism in their midst. They know better than anybody how Hamas has used them as pawns, how Hamas has tortured and punished Palestinians who seek peace.

Quite frankly, I haven't heard enough Palestinian leaders express anguish about Hamas and other extreme elements of Palestinian society. I implore them to speak up now, even when it may be hardest, because that is the only true way to honor the lives of all those lost—by transcending the enmity and bloodshed and working together in good faith for a better future.

Once Hamas is deprived of power, the Palestinians will be much freer to choose a government they want and deserve. With the prospect of a real two-state solution on the table and, for the first time, genuine statehood for the Palestinian people, I believe they will be far more likely to support more mainstream leaders committed to peace.

I think the same is true for the Israeli people. Call me an optimist, but I believe that if the Israeli public is presented with a path to a two-state solution that offers a chance at lasting peace and coexistence, then most mainstream Israelis will moderate their views and support it.

Part of that moderation must include rejecting rightwing zealots like Ministers Smotrich and Ben Gvir and the extremist Israeli settlers in the West Bank. These people do not represent a majority of the Israeli public. Yet, under Prime Minister Netanyahu's watch, they have had far too much influence.

All sides must reject "from the river to the sea" thinking, and I believe they will if the prospects for peace and a two-state solution are real.

Beyond the Israeli and Palestinian people and their leaders, there are others who bear a serious responsibility to work towards a two-state solution. Without them, it cannot succeed.

Middle Eastern powers like Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Egypt, Jordan, and other mainstream Arab states can have immense power and influence with the Palestinians. Working with the United States, they must responsibly deploy their clout, their money, and their diplomacy to support a new, demilitarized Palestinian State that rejects terror and violence. I believe they have the leverage to do this with the support of the majority of the Palestinian people, who want what any other people want: peace, security, prosperity.

I believe there is enough strength in the Arab world to get President Abbas to step down and to support a gradual succession plan for responsible Palestinian leaders to take his place.

Hamas has so wrecked society in Gaza that it will take outside involvement of Arab countries to help rebuild something better and more sustainable. It may take some time to identify such leaders, but with the considerable resources of the Arab world backing them, I believe these leaders can and will emerge, knowing that they have support.

The outlines of a deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel that were reported

before October 7 still make a great deal of sense and can be the catalyst for the creation of a viable Palestinian State. Saudi Arabia and other Arab nations should continue to pursue normalization with Israel, and this should be the foundation of a grand bargain in the Middle East that will finally make meaningful Palestinian statehood a reality.

For our part, the United States—the world's superpower—must work together with our allies to bring our immense diplomatic and financial power to bear on this situation. We can be a partner to a grand bargain in the Middle East by deepening our relationship with the Saudis and other Arab nations to induce them to make a deal—but only if they actively guide Palestinians to a more peaceful future.

On the Israeli side, the U.S. Government should demand that Israel conduct itself with a future two-state solution in mind. We should not be forced into a position of unequivocally supporting the actions of an Israeli Government that include bigots who reject the idea of a Palestinian State.

Israel is a democracy. Five months into this conflict, it is clear that Israelis need to take stock of the situation and ask: Must we change course?

At this critical juncture, I believe a new election is the only way to allow for a healthy and open decision-making process about the future of Israel, at a time when so many Israelis have lost their confidence in the vision and direction of their government. I also believe a majority of the Israeli public will recognize the need for change, and I believe that holding a new election once the war starts to wind down would give Israelis an opportunity to express their vision for the postwar future.

Of course, the United States cannot dictate the outcome of an election, nor should we try. That is for the Israeli public to decide—a public that I believe understands better than anybody that Israel cannot hope to succeed as a pariah opposed by the rest of the world. As a democracy, Israel has the right to choose its own leaders, and we should let the chips fall where they may. But the important thing is that Israelis are given a choice.

There needs to be a fresh debate about the future of Israel after October 7. In my opinion, that is best accomplished by holding an election.

If Prime Minister Netanyahu's current coalition remains in power after the war begins to wind down and continues to pursue dangerous and inflammatory policies that test existing U.S. standards for assistance, then the United States will have no choice but to play a more active role in shaping Israeli policy by using our leverage to change the present course.

The United States' bond with Israel is unbreakable, but if extremists continue to unduly influence Israeli policy, then the administration should use the tools at its disposal to make sure our support for Israel is aligned with

our broader goal of achieving long-term peace and stability in the region. I believe this would make a lasting two-state solution more likely.

Now, I know that there are many on both sides who question how we can discuss peace at a moment like this. So many Gazans are displaced from their homes and struggling to meet their most basic needs. Many are still burying and mourning their dead. Entire families have been wiped out. In Israel, everyone knows someone who was killed on October 7. So many Israelis feel that people around the world have no respect for the grief and rage unleashed by Hamas's vicious attack.

So is there real hope for peace and a two-state solution? In the face of this atrocity, who could blame even the most hopeful among us for hardening their hearts, for giving up on the possibility of peace, for giving in to the hate?

I seek my inspiration in the example of leaders who have come before us and worked for peace in the face of extreme circumstances. Some of Israel's greatest warriors and security experts have been staunch advocates for peace because they understand better than anybody that it is essential to Israel's security. David Ben-Gurion, Yitzhak Rabin, Ehud Barak—all of them sought peace with the Palestinians.

On the Palestinian side, we don't have to look very far back to see a model of responsible leadership: Salam Fayyad, the former Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority, who was clear in his condemnation of violence against the Israelis.

For the Arab leaders of today, may they find inspiration in Anwar el-Sadat of Egypt and King Hussein of Jordan, who had the courage and vision to seek peace with Israel.

Before October 7, things were moving in the right direction. The United Arab Emirates and Saudi Arabia both were on the path to normalization with Israel and with conditions that would greatly benefit the lives of the Palestinian people. Many believe that Iran motivated Hamas to disrupt this process, and indeed there have been setbacks since October 7, but recent talks between Arab and American leaders suggest the desire is stronger than ever now to find a path forward.

Arab leaders cannot lose their stomachs for peace now at this critical inflection point. They must continue to pursue the path to normalization of relations with Israel. The United States should use all of its power and influence to bring them to the table and make them cooperate constructively.

If my speaking out today has any effect, it will probably have greater influence on the Israeli and Jewish side of things. But if this conflict is to be resolved, we need comparable Palestinian and Arab leaders to also speak responsibly to their people about the path forward to peace. Now is the time for courageous leadership.

After Israelis and Palestinians have experienced so much horror and loss of

life, to not have something meaningful come out of this war would be doubly tragic.

History will look back on what we do here. Are we prepared together to have the courage to make an all-out push to bring about peace once and for all, to bring to this conflict what Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr., called the “fierce urgency of now” to end the cycles of tragedy and pain?

I have always said that when horrific things happen, some turn inwards and let their grief consume them, while others light a candle and turn their grief into power. They are able to see hope in the darkness.

In Scripture, we read about how God created the world from an infinite void, that out of the greatest darkness can come the greatest light. I hope and pray that from the brutal slaying of Israelis by Hamas and the harrowing civilian toll in Gaza, that a two-state solution where Jews and Palestinians can live in peace will prevail.

I know I am not alone in this prayer. There are right now Palestinians in Gaza, some of whom are still pulling dead family members from the rubble, who are defying Hamas and their murderous ideology and calling for a pathway to peace. There are right now some families of the victims of October 7 in Israel who have been calling for peace, asking their government to transcend this cycle of bloodshed and revenge. If they can find in their hearts a path to peace, then surely we can also.

From the ashes, may we light the candles that lead to a better future for all.

I yield the floor.

RECOGNITION OF THE MINORITY LEADER

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Mr. LUJÁN). The Republican leader is recognized.

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, the Jewish State of Israel deserves an ally that acts like one. The people of Israel, at home and in captivity, deserve America's support; and Israel's unity government and security cabinet deserve the deference befitting a sovereign democratic country.

The primary obstacles to peace in Israel's region are genocidal terrorists, like Hamas and Palestinian Islamic Jihad, who slaughter innocent people and corrupt leaders of the Palestinian Authority, who have repeatedly—repeatedly—rejected peace deals from multiple Israeli Governments.

And foreign observers who cannot keep these clear distinctions straight ought to refrain from weighing in. It is grotesque and hypocritical for Americans who hyperventilate about foreign interference in our own democracy to call for the removal of a democratically elected leader of Israel. This is unprecedented. We should not treat fellow democracies this way at all.

Things that upset leftwing activists are not a Prime Minister's policies; they are Israel's policies. Make no mistake, the Democratic Party doesn't

have an anti-Bibi problem; it has an anti-Israel problem. Israel is not a colony of America whose leaders serve at the pleasure of the party in power in Washington. Only Israel's citizens should have a say in who runs their government. This is the very definition of democracy and sovereignty. Either we respect their decisions or we disrespect their democracy.

UKRAINE

Now, Mr. President, on another entirely different matter, this week, Vladimir Putin himself responded to reports of weakening Western resolve to stand with Ukraine and of ammunition shortages on the frontlines.

Here is what Putin had to say:

It would be ridiculous for us to start negotiating with Ukraine just because it's running out of ammunition.

The chilling reality here is abundantly clear: Withholding critical weapons has not helped manage Putin's escalation—it has only emboldened him.

The administration that hesitated and wrung its hands through the early days of Russian escalation actually emboldened Putin, and it ought to be a lesson to those who insist—without firm footing in its strategy or logic—that withholding lethal assistance would somehow hasten an acceptable negotiated settlement to the conflict.

I have said too many times to count that America's adversaries only speak the language of power. But our colleagues don't have to take my word for it. Just take it straight from the dictator's mouth. Vladimir Putin is not playing for a tie. He is not headed for the negotiating table. He will not stop at Ukraine. He has told us, and he has shown us many times.

Whether or not you are willing to take the architect of the neo-Soviet Empire at his word, the facts remain the same: Equipping Ukraine for battlefield success is the surest way to help our friends resolve this war from a position of strength.

Backing Ukraine as it degrades our common adversary's military also strengthens America's interests, and investing in our own military and our own defense industrial capacity at the same time just makes common sense. It is time for the House to take up the Senate-passed national security supplemental and finish the job.

(The remarks of Mr. MCCONNELL pertaining to the introduction of S.J. Res. 65 are printed in today's RECORD under “Statements on Introduced Bills and Joint Resolutions.”)

NATIONWIDE INJUNCTIONS

Mr. MCCONNELL. Mr. President, on another matter, I would like to speak briefly on a practice in our Nation's courts that has confounded administrations of both parties with increasing frequency over the past decade. It is the issuance of nationwide injunctions.

Time after time, district judges will respond to a case challenging a Federal law by preventing its application not

just to the parties before them or within their jurisdictions but nationwide.

During the last administration, Attorneys General Sessions and Barr issued policy and litigation guidance on the issue to try and pare it back. Senator COTTON introduced a bill to eliminate the practice by statute; and Chairman GRAHAM was eager to move the Cotton bill, but Senate Democrats were not. In fact, their star witness in support of nationwide injunctions is now a Federal judge in the District of Columbia.

Rather than working with Republicans to eliminate a practice that gores the oxen of both parties, it turns out our colleagues prefer to preserve it just for themselves.

Now that nationwide injunctions are being used against the Biden administration, liberal allies in the academy and in the media have started to “target single judge divisions,” where they think conservative plaintiffs are likely to get favorable ratings from sympathetic judges.

The Democratic leader even wrote to the Judicial Conference demanding action against the scourge of judges who don't rule in favor of the Biden administration. In other words, he urged the Conference to keep the injunctions and just restrict the access to conservative judges.

It seems the Judicial Conference took the bait. On Tuesday, they instructed district courts to assign all cases seeking to invalidate State or Federal law randomly across the district in which they were brought. This will have no practical effect in the venues favored by liberal activists, but Democrats are salivating at the possibility of shutting down access to justice in the venues favored by conservatives.

What will this do in practice? It means the young woman challenging Texas abortion laws in Austin can now be forced, for no good reason, to have her case heard in El Paso. A veteran defending his Second Amendment rights in Youngstown can be sent to Toledo to have his day in court. In Kentucky, a coal miner challenging labor regulations in London could find his case handed to a judge in Covington—all to prevent so-called judge shopping.

But didn't Chief Justice Roberts say, “There are not Obama judges or Trump judges”? What exactly is the problem that demands such a drastic solution?

Here is what this policy won't do: It won't solve the issues caused by nationwide injunctions. If Democrats are right about the practical effects of this policy, any remaining incentive they have to work with Republicans on this issue will vanish—“Nationwide injunctions for me, but not for thee.”

Needless to say, if Republicans see a Federal judiciary that is using its procedural independence to wade into political disputes, any incentive we may have to defend the procedural independence will vanish as well.