



DEMOCRATIC LEADERSHIP, JEWISH DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF CONGRESS, DEMOCRATIC STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS SUPPORT ISRAEL'S RIGHT TO SELF-DEFENSE

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DEMOCRATIC CONGRESSIONAL LEADERSHIP

Speaker Nancy Pelosi (CA-08)

“Mr. Speaker, the resolution before the House [H.Res 34, recognizing Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza] underscores the more than 60-year commitment of the United States to the security of Israel.

“I proudly sponsor this resolution and I thank the other original co-sponsors of this legislation, including House Foreign Affairs Committee Chairman Howard Berman, Ranking Member Ileana Ros-Lehtinen, Majority Leader Steny Hoyer and Republican Leader John Boehner, as well as the many Members who have voiced their support for this measure and for the State of Israel.

“Today, we reaffirm that Israel, like any nation, has a right to self-defense when under attack. The rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza, which were increasing in frequency and range, constituted an unacceptable security threat to which Israel had a responsibility to respond.

“All of us regret the loss of life, injury, and destruction of property of innocent civilians that has occurred on both sides of the conflict. When I spoke with Prime Minister Olmert last week, I made clear our concerns about the loss of life among civilians. We must do all we can to relieve the pain of the innocents and to bring about a real peace that will avoid further loss of life on both sides.

“If we are to achieve a real peace, we must begin with a ceasefire to the current conflict, which is why this resolution calls for the Bush Administration to work toward that end. But a ceasefire must do more than just end the current fighting – it must address some of the root causes of the conflict so we may attain a peace that is, in the words of this resolution, ‘durable and sustainable.’

“Security for Israel and an improvement in the lives of the people of Gaza cannot be achieved as long as Hamas uses that impoverished land as a launching pad for attacks against Israelis.

“The goal of any ceasefire must be more than a return to the status quo; it must be a positive and measurable step toward a final, just resolution of the differences between Palestinians and Israelis. Our goal must be to achieve an agreement between Palestinians and Israelis that results in a secure Israel living side-by-side with a viable and independent Palestinian state—and with both finding peace and prosperity.

“The cycle of violence that feeds the fury of despair must be broken; the hard work of negotiation must be done; and the difficult but necessary decisions made so that such an agreement can be achieved.

“The United States must be an active, constant, and engaged partner in this effort. With the new energy and fresh thinking of the new Administration, we pray that an enduring settlement can be reached.

“From the moment in 1947 that President Harry Truman took the bold step of recognizing the state of Israel to this very day, America has stood and will continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder with our democratic ally in the Middle East.” *(1/9/2009)*

“Peace between Israelis and Palestinians cannot result from daily barrages of rocket and mortar fire from Hamas-controlled Gaza. Hamas and its supporters must understand that Gaza cannot and will not be allowed to be a sanctuary for attacks on Israel.

“The United States must continue to do all it can to promote peace in the region and a negotiated settlement to differences between Israelis and Palestinians. Humanitarian needs of all innocent civilians must also be addressed. But when Israel is attacked, the United States must continue to stand strongly with its friend and democratic ally.” *(12/27/2008)*

Majority Leader Steny Hoyer (MD-05)

“Today this House stands united in support of Israel as it faces enemies bent on its destruction. For eight years, Hamas, aided by Iran and others, has sent deadly rockets and mortars into Israel. In 2005, Israel dismantled its settlements and withdrew its military from Gaza—and still the rockets came, more than 6,000 since Israel’s withdrawal. Each one of them—intended to kill the maximum number of civilians, and falling indiscriminately on southern Israel’s cities and towns—was a war crime, by definition. Their harm is undeniable, and I have seen it firsthand; when I travelled to the southern Israeli town of Sderot, I met families whose children had lost the ability to speak, who no longer had control of their bodily functions. That is the profound and ever-present fear that covers much of Israel today.

“But the situation in Gaza is no less tragic. As Secretary Rice said last week, ‘Hamas has held the people of Gaza hostage ever since their illegal coup against...the legitimate President of the Palestinian people.’ To the Hamas terrorists, the ordinary people of Gaza are not fellow citizens, but, all too often, propaganda props. As reporter Jeffrey Goldberg writes: ‘Hamas terrorists unblinkingly and ostentatiously use their own civilians as human shields. I’ve seen this up-close,

and it's repulsive.' For Hamas, the lives of Palestinians are valued as cheaply as the lives of Israelis.

“Having exhausted diplomatic options and confronted with an enemy sworn to its destruction, Israel has had no choice but to take military action in order to relieve the threat against its people. By offering this resolution [H.Res 34], we recognize Israel's right to act in self-defense—the same right claimed by America, or any other sovereign nation, when faced with a similar threat. We urge both sides to protect the lives of civilians. And we urge the Administration to work towards a durable cease-fire that puts an end to the fighting and to its cause—Hamas's ability to threaten Israel.

“Only when Israel's enemies forswear violence and recognize Israel's right to exist will we be any closer to a just and lasting peace: one in which the Palestinian and Israeli people can live in their own states, side by side.” (1/9/2009)

“Israel is acting in clear self-defense in response to heinous rocket attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza. As a sovereign nation, Israel has an unequivocal right to take action to ensure the security and safety of her citizens. Indiscriminate attacks by Hamas are a serious detriment to the peace process in the region.” (12/29/2008)

Majority Leader Harry Reid (NV)

“I rise to voice my strong support of a resolution in support of Israel that I have introduced with Leader McConnell, along with an overwhelming number of bipartisan cosponsors. When we pass this resolution, the United States Senate will strengthen our historic bond with the State of Israel by reaffirming Israel's inalienable right to defend against attacks from Gaza, as well as our support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

“I spoke with Prime Minister Olmert last week and again expressed my understanding of and appreciation for the terrible situation that Israel has faced. Hamas has been firing rockets and mortars into Israel, killing and maiming innocent Israeli civilians, for more than eight years. “I ask my colleagues to imagine if this were happening here in the United States and rocket fire was coming from Vancouver, Canada, into Seattle. Would the United States react? Of course we would. We would have to react to protect our people, and it would be not only our right but our obligation to do so. That is what the Israelis have done.

“Hamas must stop the rocket fire from Gaza into Israel. That is the stated objective of the Israelis.

“I acknowledge and appreciate the calls by some for a cease-fire. Certainly we must encourage a peaceful resolution of the conflict. But we must be certain that any cease-fire is sustainable, durable, and enforceable.

“Our resolution reflects these sentiments. It states that:

- The United States Senate stands with Israel at this critical moment and recognizes Israel's right to self-defense;

- Hamas must end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel;
- Any cease-fire must be durable, enforceable and sustainable;
- The lives of innocent civilians should be protected; and
- We support a just resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict with a strong and secure Israeli living in peace with an independent Palestinian state.

“I encourage all of my colleagues to support this critical expression of support for our steadfast ally, the State of Israel.” (1/8/2009)

“For eight years they’ve been firing rockets into Israel. They’ve become more intense the last few months. Israelis have been killed, maimed and injured. [...] I think what the Israelis are doing is very important. I think this terrorist organization, Hamas, has got to be put away. They’ve got to come to their senses. The Fatah group, which is-makes up part of Palestinian group, has a peace arrangement with Israel. Hamas should do the same.

“[...] Israel, for-since 1967, controlled Gaza. They gave it to the Palestinians as a gesture of peace. And all they got are a bunch of rockets in return.

“[...] They [Hamas], in the past, have simply not lived up to what they said they would do. If there’s a way of enforcing this cease-fire, then yes. Otherwise, Israel has to continue till they stop the rockets and mortars coming into Israel, maiming, injuring...and killing Israelis.” (*Meet the Press*, 1/4/2009)

“I continue to closely monitor events in Gaza. I strongly support Israel’s right to defend its citizens against rocket and mortar attacks from Hamas-controlled Gaza, which have killed and injured Israeli citizens, and to restore security to its residents. Hamas’ failure to stop these attacks only exacerbates the humanitarian situation for the residents of Gaza and undermines efforts to attain peace and security in the region.” (12/29/2008)

Senate Majority Whip Dick Durbin (IL)

“I understand and support Israel’s defense of its borders from rocket attacks by Hamas.

“This defense has led to an escalation of violence and more death and suffering by innocent people on both sides. This crisis can only end with a ceasefire and honest negotiations for peace.

“The Palestinian people deserve leadership that is committed to bringing an end to this violence.” (12/31/2008)

JEWISH DEMOCRATIC MEMBERS OF CONGRESS

Senator Barbara Boxer (CA)

“The promise of peace in the Middle East will not be realized until attacks against Israel by terrorist organizations stop completely. No country in the world would stand for its citizens being targeted by rockets without taking appropriate action in self defense.

“It is tragic that this crisis – which was initiated by Hamas – has come to this. It is time for a real and sustainable cease-fire with complete calm on all sides. The United States and all nations of goodwill must assist in the peace process for the good of all the innocents and for the good of the world.” (12/31/2008)

Senator Russ Feingold (WI)

“No country should tolerate terrorism and Israel has every right to protect its citizens from Hamas missile attacks. But I am concerned that the military operations in Gaza could backfire and lead to more violence. In addition, every effort must be made to allow innocent civilians in Gaza to receive humanitarian assistance. I hope a ceasefire can be reached as soon as possible so that serious progress can be made toward a two-state solution. To achieve that, there must be sustained diplomatic efforts including the appointment of a high-level U.S. official to work on this issue every day until a resolution can be reached.” (1/7/2009)

Senator Frank Lautenberg (NJ)

“Hamas is abusing the people of Gaza by using their homes as a base for terror operations. The world should no longer tolerate a terrorist government in the Gaza Strip.” (*The Hill*, 12/29/2008)

Senator Chuck Schumer (NY)

“Israel, like every other nation, has a right to defend itself; I find it naïve and unrealistic that some say Israel should ‘sit down and talk’ to Hamas, a group sworn to Israel’s annihilation, that broke the recent ceasefire by flinging missiles at Israeli cities. The Palestinian people must realize that Israel is here to stay and that no amount of violence, which Hamas seeks to undertake, will change that fact.” (12/30/2008)

Senator Ben Cardin (MD)

“I strongly urge Hamas to bring an end to its rocket and mortar attacks from Gaza that have killed and injured Israeli citizens. Israel has taken actions to defend itself and its people in an effort to restore security in the region. It is in everyone’s interest, particularly the innocent lives at risk on both sides of the border, that Hamas bring an end to its aggression, recognize its neighbor’s right to exist, and work toward mutual peace and security.” (12/29/2008)

Congressman Gary Ackerman (NY-05)

“I would be dismayed if Israel succumbed to international pressure before deciding what is in its own interest.” (*JTA*, 1/6/2009)

“They [Hamas] have been the main victimizers of the innocent Palestinian people by inviting these kinds of attacks.” (*AP*, 1/4/2009)

Congresswoman Shelley Berkley (NV-01)

“I strongly support Israel’s right to defend itself from Hamas’s unprovoked missile attacks on its citizens. While I am saddened by the loss of civilian lives on both sides, Hamas can – and must – stop this violence by ending their attacks. Hamas places their military installations in civilian areas, in complete disregard for human life, and Hamas deserves sole blame.

“It is essential we stand by our ally Israel at this time and not engage in a double-standard that condemns Israel’s response, but turns a blind eye to the unconscionable attacks that began the violence in the first place. Since leaving Gaza in 2005, Israel has done everything in its power to peacefully stop Hamas from smuggling in weapons. Yet the Arab nations and the UN have done almost nothing to stop this, as more than 4,500 rockets have fallen on Israel, resulting in the senseless deaths of innocent men, women, and children.” (12/29/2008)

Congressman Howard Berman (CA-28)

“Israel has a right, indeed a duty, to defend itself in response to the hundreds of rockets and mortars fired from Gaza over the past week. No government in the world would sit by and allow its citizens to be subjected to this kind of indiscriminate bombardment. The loss of innocent life is a terrible tragedy, and the blame for that tragedy lies with Hamas.” (12/27/2008)

Congressman Eliot Engel (NY-17)

“I stand firmly with Israel as it exercises its right of self-defense against the terrorist group, Hamas. Israel has done everything it could to avert war in the face of a constant rocket barrage from the Hamas terrorists in Gaza. It was Hamas that ended the six-month ceasefire after Israel urged that it continue. It was Hamas that ignored Israel’s warnings that the continued rocket assault would bring a response. Approximately 3,000 rockets and mortars landed on southern Israel this year alone. The world must stand with Israel as it rightfully acts to protect the security of its citizens against the Gaza-based terrorists. Israel is legitimately defending its people and its sovereignty.” (12/31/2008)

Congressman Barney Frank (MA-04)

“It is important to remember that the current conflict in Gaza comes after a unilateral Israeli withdrawal from that area. Tragically, this was followed by a takeover by Hamas, which is dedicated to Israel’s destruction, and has constantly used Gaza as a base for physical attacks on Israel and Israelis.

“This use of Gaza as a base from which to attack Israel left Israel with no choice except self defense, particularly after Hamas refused to continue the imperfectly observed ceasefire, and made clear its intention to resume attacks.

“As it exercises this right of self defense, it is important for Israel to make clear its willingness to accept a genuine ceasefire - meaning an end to attacks from Gaza, and also Israel’s continuing commitment to a two state solution negotiated with Palestinians genuinely committed to that goal.” (12/31/2008)

Congressman Paul Hodes (NH-02)

“It is extremely unfortunate that Hamas’ despicable terrorist activity has necessitated a response from Israel to protect itself. I had the opportunity to visit Sderot last year and saw first hand the damage done by incessant rocket attacks launched from Gaza. The United States must stand by Israel’s right to defend itself. We call on Hamas to renounce terrorism, recognize Israel’s right to exist and to live in peace. The attacks from Hamas must end for a constructive peace dialogue to begin. Our thoughts are with the families in the region during this difficult time and our hope is for an end to the violence and peace negotiations to resume.” (12/31/2008)

Congressman Steve Israel (NY-02)

“Israel unconditionally left Gaza in the hopes that Palestinian leaders would build a State, build an economy, and build hope for their people. Instead, Hamas built rockets and fired them on innocent Israeli families. Israel is doing what any nation on earth would do under similar circumstances: defending its people from attacks by a neighbor sworn to its destruction. It's now time for responsible Palestinian and Arab leaders to assertively reject Hamas' strategy of destruction and attacks so there can be long term stability in the region.” (12/30/2008)

Congressman Ron Klein (FL-22)

“Once again, Israelis have endured a bombardment of hundreds of rockets on their homes and communities. Israel is doing what any sovereign government in the world would do and should do: defend its citizens and secure its borders. Hamas’ unprovoked actions, which broke the six month ceasefire agreement, clearly demonstrate that Hamas is solely responsible for the death and injuries on both sides. With the incitement and assistance of radical elements in the region, Hamas is destabilizing any chance for peace and security. Israel’s actions are justified, and I join all Americans who believe in democracy and freedom in standing by Israel in her time of need.” (12/29/2008)

Congresswoman Nita Lowey (NY-18)

“Continued and intensified missile and mortar attacks from Gaza into Southern Israel threaten the security of innocent families in Israel and Gaza. Hamas, which continues to deny Israel's right to exist, will stop at nothing to deny peace to the region, including exploiting and endangering Gaza civilians. Israel has the right and responsibility to defend itself and its citizens from these ruthless attacks by striking the terrorist infrastructure in Gaza. It is my hope that this week's events will make clear to Hamas that its attacks on Israeli communities must end so that negotiations toward a peaceful coexistence in the region can continue.” (12/28/2008)

Congressman Jerrold Nadler (NY-28)

“Hamas has left Israel with no choice in this situation, faced with incessant barrages of rocket fire by Hamas into Israeli cities like Ashdod, Ashkelon and Sderot, Israel must defend her citizens against these deadly attacks. We would expect nothing less from any other government. And, unfortunately, by hiding its military operations behind the cover of civilian life, Hamas has needlessly imperiled innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza.” (12/30/2008)

Congressman Steve Rothman (NJ-9)

“I strongly support the Jewish State of Israel’s right to defend itself against the endless onslaught of thousands of rocket and mortar attacks that have been fired on innocent Israeli civilians by Hamas terrorists. In fact, since Israel’s voluntary departure from the Gaza Strip in September 2005, Hamas has launched more than 6,000 of these rocket attacks on Israeli towns.

“By breaking the six-month ceasefire with hundreds more of its deadly rocket attacks, Hamas has once again demonstrated it would rather pursue an agenda of bloodshed and terror than one that could result in a peaceful two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. While I deeply regret the loss of civilian life on both sides, the Israeli government is absolutely justified to take

action to defend their endangered citizens and bring an end to Hamas' regime of terror as quickly as possible." (12/31/2008)

Congressman Adam Schiff (CA-29)

"Madam Speaker, the State of Israel has a right to defend its territory and its people from attack, whether that attack emanates from another sovereign nation, or, as in this case, from a terrorist organization that seized control of Gaza in a bloody putsch 18 months ago.

" Hamas clearly chose to escalate its conflict against Israel by unilaterally declaring an end to the ceasefire that was implemented last June and launching a large-scale rocket attack on Israeli population centers. The Israeli government exercised great forbearance in the weeks prior to the formal breakdown of the ceasefire, which Hamas was already violating repeatedly, and had the international community more strongly condemned these attacks and taken action to stop them, the current Israeli offensive may have been unnecessary. But, Hamas bears ultimate responsibility for provoking this attack and for putting 1.5 million Palestinians in harm's way--a fact that Arab leaders from Egypt to Saudi Arabia have noted.

"Along with millions of Americans, I grieve the terrible loss of life of innocent Israelis and Palestinians. Hamas's decision to fire rockets from populated areas and Israeli strikes on those targets have resulted in many civilian casualties, and our hearts go out to all the innocents who have suffered.

"It is too early to tell if Israel's military actions will quell the threat of rocket attacks from Gaza and shut down smuggling routes from Egypt. The conflict in Lebanon proved how difficult this can be and a strong international effort will be necessary to avoid a recurrence of missile strikes in both theaters. This will require a level of resolution thus far not demonstrated by the international community.

"Israel's long-term security can only be guaranteed by a successful peace process that leads to the creation of a Palestinian state living side-by-side and in peace with Israel. President-elect Obama has committed himself to reinvigorating the search for peace and it is my hope that a timely conclusion of the present hostilities will allow the new President to begin these efforts from the first days of his administration. (*Congressional Record*, 1/6/2009)

Congresswoman Allyson Schwartz (PA-13)

"Israel's response to the relentless rocket attacks from Hamas is well within its right as a sovereign nation to protect the safety and security of its nation and her citizens. The United States will continue to stand with our friend and ally, Israel, and will work together towards a long term resolution to this ongoing conflict." (12/31/2008)

Congressman Brad Sherman (CA-27)

" Hamas essentially renounced its own cease-fire effective December 19th. Hamas-backed militants have fired hundreds of rockets directly into civilian neighborhoods across southwestern Israel since December 19th and over 3,500 rockets since 2005. The indiscriminate targeting of Israeli civilians has emptied streets, forcing thousands into bomb shelters.

“The Israeli response has been a series of targeted strikes against Hamas militants, aimed directly at those who are launching the attacks on Israeli civilian population centers. Humanitarian relief -- including nearly 100 truckloads of aid today -- continues to enter Gaza, and the Israeli military is taking extreme caution to limit civilian casualties.

“Gaza cannot be a safe haven for launching continuous bombardment of urban centers. We must support the right of Israel to defend itself.

“The fighting must be put in context. The goal of Israel is to live peaceably alongside a Palestinian State. The goal of Hamas is to kill or expel every Jew from the Middle East.

“Hamas does not deserve sympathy, or even a moderation in our level of condemnation, merely because its thousands of efforts to kill Israeli civilians are usually unsuccessful.

“Blame for the current carnage must be placed at the feet of Hamas and its supporters and apologists.” (12/30/2008)

Congresswoman Debbie Wasserman Schultz (FL-20)

“Over the past few days, it has pained me to hear the unfair and unjust criticism of Israel as she strives to protect her citizens from Hamas's attacks. Israel, like all sovereign nations, has not only a right, but moreover, an obligation to ensure the safety and security of her citizens.

“We would not allow our government to stand idly by as hundreds of rockets and mortars came crashing down on the heads of our citizens, and we cannot expect Israel to stand idly by either. There is no one to blame for the escalation of violence but Hamas. Hamas's unprovoked attacks on Israel must stop. All parties must work swiftly toward a renewal of the truce, and ultimately, peace.” (12/29/2008)

Congressman Henry Waxman (CA-30)

“Israel's operation in Gaza is an act of self defense. It is a blatant double standard for those who criticize Israel to expect any nation to stand idle as its cities and citizens are indiscriminately shelled with thousands of mortars and rockets.

“Hamas has abused its perch in Gaza to serve only its own terrorist ambitions. Instead of building roads, Hamas constructed tunnels to smuggle missiles and weapons. Instead of building hospitals, Hamas embedded its rocket launchers, ammunition depots and supply routes to maximize risk for civilian populations.

“Those of us who embrace the hope for a two state solution recognize that Israel must succeed in stopping Hamas and delegitimizing its tactics. If Israel cannot prevail, it would be a huge setback for the prospect of peace and reconciliation. It would be hard to imagine Israel agreeing to a Palestinian state on the West Bank if it could become a staging ground for missile attacks on major population centers.” (1/7/2009)

Congressman Anthony Weiner (NY-9)

“Israel has a right to defend itself. No nation can be expected to abide a barrage of rockets falling on its citizens. In recent days Hamas had used Gaza as a staging ground for an air attack on its neighbor. It had to stop. Israel's actions today were justified.” (12/30/2008)

Congressman Robert Wexler (FL-19)

“All of us want to see a stable, secure, peaceful Middle East free from violence. [...But] it was unconscionable to expect the Israeli government, or any other government for that matter, to sit idly by [as] rockets rain down on its citizens. [...] Any and all allegations of moral equivalency between Israel and Hamas are patently false.

“Military power alone may not achieve peace, but peace can only be achieved from a position of strength, and it is unrealistic to believe that Israel should continue to exhibit restraint endlessly when Hamas continues to fire untold numbers of rockets. In the past, if history is a judge in the Middle East, progress is most often made after Israel and the West show strength and resolve. Weakness tends to promote further aggressive activity by Palestinian rejectionist groups.” (JTA, 1/7/2009)

“I strongly support Israel’s right to self-defense in response to the continuous deadly rocket and mortar attacks launched by Hamas and other Palestinian terrorist organizations into Israel. Americans stand shoulder to shoulder with the Israeli people during this difficult time and strongly condemn Hamas’ perpetrated terrorism.

“Instead of using violence and extremism to achieve its destructive goals, Hamas must adhere to the international principles established by the Quartet, including ending terrorism, recognition of Israel, and acceptance of previous agreements and obligations.

“I am deeply disappointed by the statements of some international leaders who are quick to chastise Israel and unwilling to condemn lethal Hamas rocket and mortar attacks. It is unconscionable for anyone to expect that the Israeli government or any other government for that matter, to sit idly as thousands of deadly rockets rain down on their cities and threaten the well-being and security of their citizens. I urge the international community to join the United States in denouncing the daily terrorist acts carried out by Hamas and support Israel’s right to self-defense and security.” (12/29/ 2008)

DEMOCRATIC STATE AND LOCAL GOVERNMENT OFFICIALS

Governor Jon Corzine (NJ)

“The current crisis in Israel and Gaza reflects a fundamental truth: Violence begets violence. What is happening now in the region underscores two important issues:

“First, all countries around the world have the absolute right and the responsibility to defend themselves against attacks on their people and their sovereignty. Israel has justly asserted that right and responsibility, as any country would, in the face of consistent and recently-increased destructive rocket bombardments against its territory and its citizens by Hamas. Civilized people everywhere must speak out against terrorist acts.

“Second, the breakdown of the Gaza ceasefire and resumption of violence are tragic reminders of the urgency to work toward comprehensive peace in the Middle East.

“Along with people of all backgrounds and faiths, I mourn the loss of innocent life and believe we are compelled by our common humanity to ensure that critical aid and assistance flow unhindered to innocent civilians in Gaza. I hope all parties respond to the urgent needs of the civilian population, and applaud Israel’s decision to open the borders for the life-saving work of United Nations agencies, the Red Cross and other humanitarian organizations.

“I pray the New Year will bring renewed efforts toward peace.” (1/3/2009)

Governors Dave Freudenthal (WY), Ted Kulongoski (OR), and Bill Ritter (CO)*

“ The recent increase in hostilities between Israel and Hamas is evidence that lasting peace in the region is an elusive goal. [...] We support the right of Israel to defend itself from aggressors and to ensure the peace and prosperity of its citizens. We therefore, are calling for an immediate cessation of hostilities between Israel and Hamas and the establishment of a lasting and meaningful ceasefire. For this process to begin, Hamas must end its series of rocket attacks into Israeli sovereign land.” (1/2/2009)

**Governors Jon M. Huntsman, Jr. (R-UT) and “Butch” Otter (R-ID) also signed onto this joint statement.*

Governor Martin O’Malley (MD)

“Israel, like every nation, has the right to defend herself and her people from attack. Since Israel’s withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has launched thousands of rocket and mortar attacks indiscriminately against civilian targets in Israel.

“Just as Hamas chose to provoke a military response from Israel with endless rocket attacks, Hamas also has the choice to reject terror and violence with an immediate ceasefire, recognize Israel’s right to exist, and accept the existing agreements between Israel and the Palestinians as they work toward a just and lasting peace.

“In this current conflict, the United States stands with its democratic ally Israel in her desire for a lasting peace in the Middle East with secure borders.” (12/30/2008)

Governor David Patterson (NY)

“As Americans, we are blessed to live in a democracy which embraces different religions, cultures and ethnicities. More than seven years ago, New Yorkers’ faith in that democracy was tested when we suffered our own tragedy at the hands of terrorists. But we did not let that dark day in our history diminish our resolve to fight for our freedom. We continue to stand in solidarity with those who defend themselves in the pursuit of peace.

“Over the past few days, I have closely monitored the current escalation of violence in Israel and Gaza. I hope and pray for a peaceful solution for both sides and I strongly condemn Hamas for breaking the current ceasefire. I believe the Israeli people, under constant attack from the Palestinian territories, have a right to protect themselves and I stand with them as they fight to defend the basic rights of humanity.

“I traveled to Israel in 2007 and I discovered firsthand what I had always known to be true – Israel is an extraordinary democracy blessed with very courageous citizens who refuse to live their lives in fear. New Yorkers have experienced the horror of terrorism; we must not and will not let senseless acts of terror undermine our commitment and resolve to fight for democratic principles both at home and around the world.” (12/31/2008)

Mayor Sheila Dixon (Baltimore)

“During this time of crisis, our hearts go out to the citizens of Israel, and our sister-city, Ashkelon. Our thoughts and prayers are with you, your citizens and all the people of Israel as they fight for their security and a peaceful existence.

“It is during times like these when the strength of our leaders and the resolve of our citizens are tested. With a heavy heart, I sent a special message to Ashkelon’s new Mayor, Mr. Benny Vaknin, upon hearing news that Ashkelon and the State of Israel are again under attack.

“Baltimore has enjoyed a fruitful relationship with his beautiful city since 2005. I hope and pray that one day soon we can return to visit a safe and peaceful Ashkelon.” (12/30/2008)

Mayor Antonio Villaraigosa (Los Angeles)

“Every country has a right to defend itself against attacks from a foreign enemy. Every nation is obligated to beat back forces dedicated to its destruction. And Israel cannot sit silently while innocent civilians are attacked.” (1/7/2009)