

**The Following Members of Congress have Issued Thoughtful Statements on the Crisis
between Israel and Hamas Supporting Israel's Right to Self-Defense;
US, Israeli and Regional Interests by Calling for Israeli-Hamas Ceasefire; and/or
Renewed US Engagement in MidEast Peace Process**

1. Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)
2. Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA)
3. Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA)
4. Rep. Michael Capuano (D-MA)
5. Rep. Christopher Carney (D-PA)
6. Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA)
7. Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY)
8. Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)
9. Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR)
10. Rep. John Dingell (D-MI)
11. Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT)
12. Rep. Donna Edwards (D-MD)
13. Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN)
14. Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA)
15. Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA)
16. Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ)
17. Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA)
18. Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)
19. Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX)
20. Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)
21. Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)
22. Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)
23. Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA)
24. Rep. Eric Massa (D-NY)
25. Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA)
26. Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)
27. Rep. James McGovern (D-MA)
28. Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA)
29. Rep. George Miller (D-CA)
30. Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA)
31. Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI)
32. Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA)
33. Rep. John Olver (D-MA)
34. Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr (D-NJ)
35. Speaker Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)
36. Rep. David Price (D-NC)
37. Rep. Nick Rahall (D - WV)
38. Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY)
39. Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI)
40. Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)
41. Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)
42. Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA)
43. Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA)
44. Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA)
45. Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)
46. Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)

Rep. Earl Blumenauer (D-OR)

Oregonians have long watched the momentous changes in the Middle East with hope and concern. One fundamental lesson has emerged: without political processes that aim for peace, violent events and the acts of extremists can overpower the desire of people across the region to live in security.

With daily rocket attacks ever deeper into Israel and hundreds already killed in what Israel calls the start of a multi-stage offensive, forceful U.S. diplomatic re-engagement to support peace is critical. Yet, nearly a decade of failed Bush policies has left America in a weakened position abroad. I was particularly discouraged that the U.S. did not try to broker an extension of the ceasefire between Israel and Hamas or improve the humanitarian situation on the ground. An out-of-touch U.S. leadership has made America, Israel, and the region less safe.

The Bush administration should use its remaining days to renew our commitment to this region and forcefully advocate for a path towards peace. Although a secure Israel and an independent Palestinian state living side by side seems less likely at the moment, I have high hopes that the new Obama administration will exhibit a strong reversal of course and re-engage the region. To make this path ready I strongly urge all parties to usher in the New Year with a renewed ceasefire agreement. We must continue to work for a peace process that recognizes the legitimate needs of both Israelis and Palestinians. This is the only hope for a better future. (December 30, 2008)

Rep. Charles Boustany (R-LA)

Washington, D.C. – U.S. Representative Charles W. Boustany, Jr., R-Southwest Louisiana, issued the following statement related to the conflict in Israel and Gaza.

“The events of the past week are a horrific reminder of a conflict which has claimed the lives of too many innocent civilians – both Palestinian and Israeli,” Boustany said. “Unfortunately, elements of Hamas and their proxies continue to use terror tactics against innocent civilians in order to spur violence. The continuation of this conflict has severe implications on U.S. national security in the region. Therefore, we must work diligently with the international community to bring about a reliable ceasefire to stop the unnecessary bloodshed on both sides, prevent continued weapons smuggling, and address the severe humanitarian crisis within Gaza.”

“The people of Gaza deserve a government that seeks peace and one that will return to the negotiation process in order to develop a long-term settlement. Israelis and Palestinians deserve to live in peace and lasting security.” (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Lois Capps (D-CA)

"Obviously, Israel has the absolute right to defend itself from Hamas terrorists and other threats to its security. The ongoing rocket attacks on Israel are unacceptable and must be stopped. However, I fear the current military operation in Gaza represents a vastly disproportionate response that will further destabilize the region.

"Simple humanity demands that we grieve for the dead Palestinian child as much as we mourn the dead Israeli child. The numbers of dead and injured in Gaza, and the televised images of the humanitarian crisis now unfolding are truly shocking. And while this renewed state of war is clearly a tragedy for the Palestinian people, it will also bring a renewed state of fear in Israel because the threat of another wave of suicide bombing in Israeli cities is all too real.

"As a Member of Congress strongly dedicated to Israel's security, I believe an immediate ceasefire is necessary. And since this eruption of violence in Gaza is so clearly detrimental to U.S. national interests, I call upon both President Bush and President-elect Obama to use their influence to push both sides to stop shooting and renew the ceasefire." (December 29, 2008)

Rep. Michael Capuano (D-MA)

"Once again the world witnesses appalling carnage in the Middle East. The casualties are terrible, and any feeling person must sympathize with the suffering experienced by civilians, in Gaza and in southern Israel. It is time to commit ourselves to a negotiated peace, a two-state solution that acknowledges the right of Israelis and Palestinians to live in peace and freedom. Israel has the right to defend its citizens from rocket attacks. Palestinians have the right to expect from their elected leaders realism in the face of history. Israel has defended itself successfully for sixty years and will continue to do so. I urge that its leaders also commit themselves to confidence-building measures with Palestinians who seek peace and to cooperation with them to improve the lives of the Palestinian and Israeli people.

I urge President-elect Obama to quickly designate a Special Envoy for Mideast Peace. This would be an important expression of our concern for freedom, dignity, and well-being of all peoples of the region. A ceasefire, observed by all parties, credibly verified and effectively monitored, could be an important first step, but it is not a substitute for sustained, purposeful diplomacy." (Public Statement, January 7, 2009)

Rep. Christopher Carney (D-PA)

Washington, D.C.—Congressman Christopher P. Carney issued the following statement on the Israel/Gaza conflict:

"While I am saddened by the loss of innocent lives on both sides of the border between Israel and Gaza, no sovereign nation can be expected to absorb relentless missile attacks without defending itself. While I am not surprised by their actions, I am still disappointed by Hamas' refusal to stop terrorizing the people of Israel. I remain concerned, too, that Iran's ties to Hamas

are only further exacerbating the current conflict. Despite being on his way out of office, I implore President Bush and his diplomatic team to help establish a ceasefire so that regional stakeholders can begin meaningful negotiations toward a more lasting peace.” (Press Release, January 8, 2009)

Rep. Gerry Connolly (D-VA)

Fairfax, VA -- Congressman-Elect Gerry Connolly made the following statement today concerning the ongoing security situation in Israel: “The current tragic circumstances in the Gaza strip were triggered by Hamas' decision not to renew the cease fire with Israel and to resume mortar shelling of Israel proper. Israel has been forced to respond with air strikes to protect and defend innocent civilians exposed to such wanton violence. This relentless cycle of terror and retaliation will not cease until there is clear recognition of the right of Israel to exist within secure borders, at peace with its neighbors. That will require the re-engagement of intense U.S. diplomacy in the region and the willingness of all parties to return to the negotiating table.” (Press Release, January 3, 2009)

Dear Friend,

Thank you for contacting me about the situation in the Middle East. I appreciate your interest in this issue and your views are important to me.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is contentious and long-standing. I believe it is crucial that we begin working toward achieving peace in the region. The United States must be seen as an honest, independent broker able to bring both sides to the table. We must keep in mind that a negotiated peace is in the interest of all parties - Israel, Palestine, and their neighbors.

The recent conflict in Gaza has created a humanitarian crisis that cannot go on and highlights the need for the United States to re-engage in the peace process. From my position on the Foreign Affairs Committee, I will be urging President Obama to do just that.

Once again, thank you for expressing your concern on this very important issue. I enjoyed hearing from you.

Sincerely,

Gerald Connolly
Member of Congress

Rep. Geoff Davis (R-KY)

Washington, DC— Congressman Geoff Davis issued the following statement on the situation in Gaza:

“The citizens of Israel have the right to defend themselves against the repeated attacks on their country. Despite Israel’s voluntary withdrawal from Gaza in 2005, Hamas continues to instigate violence in the region. The United States must engage diplomatically and encourage all parties involved to achieve a peaceful end to the cycle of violence. Our nation’s involvement in this conflict cannot wait pending the transition of our government. I encourage President Bush and President-elect Obama to immediately join together to facilitate a diplomatic solution that will assure the security of Israel.

“In 2007, while visiting Israel, I met with victims of Hamas rocket attacks. Clearly, Hamas has targeted civilians to draw Israel into retaliation. For Hamas to achieve a lasting peace, they must be willing to revoke their commitment to destroy Israel and control the provocations of their militias. Tragically, innocents on both sides have been caught in the middle of this struggle.”
(Press Release, January 6, 2009)

Rep. Susan Davis (D-CA)

I rise today in support of Israel’s right to self-defense and a broader U.S. diplomatic role in the Middle East.

The Israeli government has a right and a responsibility to defend Israeli citizens.

...and we have an obligation to support our ally in times of crisis.

However, this body also has an obligation to advance the dialogue beyond the conflict of today toward how we can achieve a stable peace in the future.

This conflict shows that the United States cannot manage the situation from the sidelines.

This approach only serves Iran and radical elements in the region.

Rather, we must maintain a high-level diplomatic presence that allows responsible parties to capture every opportunity for peace.

I believe that the new Administration and the new Congress represent an opportunity to regain our position as an honest broker in the region.

For this to happen, the tone coming from Washington must be in sharp contrast to the last eight years.

Congress helps set that tone, which is why I hope my colleagues will use this tragedy as an opportunity to call for an end to this conflict and a broader American diplomatic presence in the region. (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Peter DeFazio (D-OR)

"Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to H. Res. 34. While I fully support the right of Israel to defend itself and its citizens, the resolution before us today appears to endorse the failed strategies and policies of the Bush Administration in finding a peaceful resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Bush Administration quashed a real effort towards peace begun by the Clinton Administration and turned a blind eye towards 8 years of unnecessary and avoidable turmoil.

The peace process lost many years of progress and the incoming Obama administration faces a great challenge to reconstruct the broken peace process. President-elect Obama and his designee for Secretary of State, Hillary Clinton, must take immediate steps to engage key international players in an attempt to restart talks towards a two-state solution to the conflict. This will be difficult and slow, but necessary to find long-term peace for a region strained by violence.

The House resolution before us today does not reflect the complexities of the current conflict and would not help the incoming Obama administration in bringing about the necessary changes in U.S. foreign policy to promote a lasting peace in the region. The world is excited and hopeful with a new administration that has promised a return to a cooperative U.S. foreign policy. This resolution fails to reflect that hope. Therefore, I voted present on H. Res. 34." (January 9, 2009)

Rep. John Dingell (D-MI)

Madam Speaker, since 2001, thousands of rockets and mortar have been indiscriminately fired into southern Israel at innocent civilians. When Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005, these rocket attacks continued. In December 2008, the negotiated cease fire ended and Hamas responded by firing over 60 rockets into Israel in a single day. Hundreds of thousands of Israelis are terrorized daily by fear of attack while an extremist group who calls for Israel's destruction continues to operate.

The Israeli government determined it had no choice but to respond to Hamas militarily. Sadly, the cost has been great. Since Israel began its two-week offensive on the Gaza strip, over 750 Palestinians have died. An UN-operated school was bombed and dozens of innocent children were killed. In an unusual move, the International Red Cross issued a statement that "the Israeli military failed to meet its obligation under international humanitarian law to care for and evacuate the wounded." Gazans are trapped with little ability to seek shelter or help for the wounded.

Does Israel have a right to defend itself? My answer is unequivocally, yes. I cannot argue with most of the statements contained in this resolution. I do not condone the tactics Hamas uses in its efforts to destroy Israel, nor is it acceptable that an elected government refuses to recognize Israel's right to exist and exploits its own citizens to further its extreme agenda. But I cannot also pretend this resolution, H. Res. 34, will help bring about a cease-fire in Gaza, resolve the extreme humanitarian crisis Gazans face, or bring us closer to a final resolution sought by the Quartet, Israel, the Palestinian Authority, and Middle Eastern nations.

That a peaceful resolution and a two-state solution seem to grow more distant with each passing day is a very real consequence of the Bush Administration's inaction and failure of leadership. Eight years ago, President Bush came to office and pledged to negotiate a "road map to peace." As we can clearly see, the few efforts President Bush made during his tenure have fallen far short.

Last night, the United Nations passed a cease-fire resolution. Today, the crisis continues. In this ongoing battle, words and actions are very different things. That is why President-elect Obama must reengage the peace process immediately upon taking office. He has the support of many of the Middle Eastern nations, who have attempted to fill in as mediators while the Bush Administration was asleep at the wheel and who also have an interest in rallying against the growing threat of Iran. President-elect Obama faces many challenges when he enters office, but with the help of his capable appointed Secretary of State, and my dear friend, Hillary Clinton, I believe the United States can once again take the lead in achieving a peaceful two-state solution for the Israelis and Palestinians. (January 9, 2009)

Sen. Christopher Dodd (D-CT)

"I fully support Israel's right to defend itself from rockets aimed at innocent Israeli civilians, fired by Hamas militants in Gaza. Hamas must end its support for and involvement in terrorist attacks against Israel. But there is no military solution to the conflict. I support the efforts of the Bush Administration to press both sides to accept an interim truce, and I am committed to working with the Obama Administration in using all of America's diplomatic might to bring both sides to the negotiating table so that Israelis and Palestinians can finally live side by side in peace." (Press Release, January 5, 2009)

Rep. Donna Edwards (D-MD)

Washington, D.C. – Congresswoman Donna F. Edwards (D-MD) released the following statement regarding the violence in Gaza.

"I am deeply disturbed by this week's escalation of hostilities in the Gaza Strip, as I have been by the ongoing rocket fire into southern Israel. To support Israel and to ease the humanitarian crisis facing the people of Gaza, the United States must work actively for an immediate ceasefire that ends the violence, stops the rockets, and removes the blockade of Gaza.

"Israel has a right to protect its citizens, but I remain convinced that military measures have only a limited role to play -- a political and diplomatic resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is the only way to stop the violence permanently and bring long-term stability to the region. As Americans, we too have a strong interest in ensuring peace, stability, and security in the Middle East and that is why I am committed to supporting active American diplomacy in the region, working together with partners in the international community, from the earliest days of President-elect Obama's administration. America should not sit on the sidelines, as we are doing

today -- this does a disservice to our own national interests and security and is unhelpful in bringing stability and security to Israel and the Middle East." (January 2, 2009)

Rep. Keith Ellison (D-MN)

Washington, D.C. -- Congressman Keith Ellison (D-Minneapolis) called on both Israel and Hamas to halt the renewed escalation of violence in Gaza.

"Over 380 casualties have already been reported," Ellison stated. "The escalation of violence leaves both parties less secure and with a deeper desire to seek revenge. I believe the following actions must be taken at once if peace and security are to be achieved," Ellison stated: Strong diplomatic intervention by the United States, the European Union (EU), the United Nations, and Russia (the "Quartet") is necessary to restore the ceasefire that existed before this latest violence. The Quartet should act quickly and decisively to bring all parties to the negotiating table and establish a durable ceasefire.

The Israeli and Egyptian borders must be opened at once to allow the innocent civilians caught in this violence to seek refuge, and for the flow of food, water and medical supplies into Gaza. Those individuals fleeing the bombing should be allowed to cross borders without harassment by any country.

The toll on human life is already enormous -- over 380 reported killed thus far. The casualties include many non-combatants such as United Nations personnel, and children. If the Israeli Defense Forces engage in a ground offensive, as they have said they will, untold casualties will surely follow. Hamas has already responded to a likely ground assault with the following belligerent defiance: 'It would be easier to dry the sea of Gaza than to defeat the resistance and uproot Hamas, which is in every house of Gaza.' The escalation of violence is destructive and counterproductive to efforts underway to achieve peace and stability in the region. It is time for sanity to prevail. The international community must step forward to establish a ceasefire (as the French have offered.)

I have been to Sderot, Israel and I have seen firsthand both the physical and emotional destruction caused by the rocket attacks. Israeli citizens living near the Gaza border have been repeatedly harassed daily. At the same time, life for the people of Gaza has become increasingly unliveable -- with shortages of food, fuel and basic medical supplies. The 1.4 million inhabitants of the Gaza Strip exist in a state of dreadful isolation, cut off from the world, often including the world's media. Earlier this year the people of Gaza broke through the walls separating Gaza and Egypt simply to purchase groceries. Provisions should be made immediately to deliver humanitarian aid to the people of Gaza and lessen civilian suffering.

Inflammatory rhetoric and aggressive actions must stop on both sides. Political one up-manship for the next Israeli election should not be carried out at the expense of the innocent in Gaza. All

parties should do everything possible to resume dialogue and negotiations with the goal of restoring and maintaining a lasting peace and security.

History has shown that ground troops and air strikes have not resolved conflict in the Middle East. If we try to resolve conflict with military might and nothing else, then we will be no safer than we were before. Diplomacy is necessary to save lives and yield a lasting peace with security. If we truly want peace for the citizens of Israel and Gaza, then we will understand that the ability to eradicate the extreme elements fomenting war will be done so with jobs, food, water, medical supplies, schools, books -- and not bombs. The United States government must play an active role in pursuing real peace with security in the Middle East.

I add my voice to those members of the U.N. who have called for an end to the violence of this past week. I agree with those who demand strict observance of international humanitarian law, which must be observed immediately and without exception.

Ellison called on the Bush Administration to act immediately and forcefully to exercise all diplomatic channels possible to stop the violence. "If the President does not act now, more lives will be lost and the hatred and enmity will deepen," Ellison stated. "That will be President Bush's legacy," Ellison added.

"If the Bush Administration chooses to passively ignore the renewed violence during the waning days of their time in office, then I fully expect to work with President-elect Obama in actively, aggressively, and with full purpose, engaging all parties in the pursuit of both a lasting peace, and a secure future. Nothing less is acceptable," Ellison concluded.

Rep. Sam Farr (D-CA)

"The cycle of violence we're seeing in the Middle East is heart-wrenching. While no one disputes Israel's right to protect its people, escalating violence only feeds the death and despair of the region. A ceasefire is in the best interest of the United States and both parties involved and must be the immediate goal of the global community.

"This latest spasm of violence in Gaza is an unmistakable signal that the policy of disengagement adopted by the Bush administration is an utter failure. The U.S. government must re-engage in the Middle East peace process, providing the active and constructive diplomacy necessary for both short- and long-term peace.

"It has become clear that political will alone cannot create the peace that so many Palestinians and Israelis hope for. As with so many other conflicts around the world, this enduring struggle is rooted in a culture of poverty and misery. We must shatter that history of anguish if these two states are to live side by side." (January 6, 2009)

Rep. Bob Filner (D-CA)

As the war in Gaza rages on, San Diego area lawmakers sound off about what the U-S role should be in bringing peace to the region. Tanya Snyder reports.

Filner: This is madness what's going on. There's got to be an immediate cease fire, and then hopefully a true negotiated peace.”

He says he hopes the new president will personally go to the region.

Filner: Only the United States can get in there and negotiate with both sides and I hope Mr. Obama does.

President Bush says Israel is justified in stepping up its attacks. Obama has refrained from commenting. (January 6, 2009, by Tanya Snyder, Capitol News Connection)

Rep. Rush Holt (D-NJ)

Extension of Remarks (H.Res. 34)

Madam Speaker, I am voting for H. Res. 34, which expresses vigorous support and unwavering commitment to the welfare and security of the State of Israel. The indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas are an unacceptable assault on Israel's citizens and her sovereignty. Like all nations in the world, Israel has the right and responsibility to respond in self-defense. The United States has a responsibility to stand with Israel, our closest ally in the Middle East, during this crisis.

At the same time, the United States has a responsibility to ensure that the humanitarian needs in Gaza are being addressed promptly and responsibly. The present resolution, H. Res. 34, is not so clear on that. The United States should have done more to ensure that they were being met even before the recent fighting, just as the United States should have done more to stop the mortars and rockets fired from Gaza over recent years. I am troubled deeply by reports that the humanitarian situation, bad as it has been, continues to deteriorate. Israel must make every effort to protect the innocent and prevent the destruction of civilian communities. All parties must work as quickly as possible to enact a durable and sustainable ceasefire that will allow for a lasting improvement of the humanitarian situation in Gaza and for the long-term security of Israel.

It is critical to recognize that even a durable and sustainable ceasefire is only a temporary solution to the ongoing Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We should remember that extremism incubates in societies afflicted with poverty, hopelessness, and humiliation. We must work tirelessly to diminish the appeal and influence of terrorists by lifting up all of those trapped in these conditions. It is equally necessary that we continue to assist moderate Palestinians and strengthen governments that are committed to securing a lasting peace with the State of Israel.

I continue to believe that the United States has a vital role to play in brokering an enduring peace agreement. My thoughts and prayers are with all the innocent civilians suffering in Israel and Gaza. For their sake, the United States must recommit itself to bringing Israelis and Palestinians back to the negotiating table. This includes the need to create a viable representative of the Palestinians that can negotiate in good faith. And it includes the need to get the Israelis to make the daily welfare of ordinary Palestinians one of the principal criteria for any negotiations. The future security of the Middle East depends on negotiating a just, permanent, and peaceful settlement between Israelis and Palestinians that both guarantees Israel's security and establishes a Palestinian state.”(January 9, 2009)

Rep. Mike Honda (D-CA)

Madam Speaker, I rise today to offer my comments on H. Res. 34, a resolution which reaffirms our commitment to Israel and its right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza and Hamas.

I have always been a strong supporter of Israel, and consider myself a good friend to Israel. Israel's right to exist as a country is unquestionable in my mind, and I support its right to defend itself from those who would do harm to its people.

I also strongly support a durable and sustainable cease-fire in Gaza, and support a resolution to the conflict through diplomacy and negotiations between Israel and the Palestinian Authority. I have consistently supported efforts to increase peacemaking efforts in the region, including asking the President to appoint a special envoy to the Middle East.

For these important reasons, I voted in favor of H. Res. 34. This resolution rightly reiterates our support for the safety, security, and welfare of Israel. However, Madam Speaker, H. Res. 34 is not perfect, and my vote for it today is not unequivocal. The resolution does not adequately address the civilian casualties in Gaza, or the worsening humanitarian situation there. The world has a responsibility to join together to help solve this crisis. I also hope that the incoming Administration will turn this hope into reality.

The human consequence of this violence has taken a tragic toll on Gaza civilians, where access to basic humanitarian needs is limited, and dangerous. Some reports by the International Committee of the Red Cross describe the movement of ambulances and aid workers as extremely difficult, and attribute that difficulty to Israel's restrictions. In addition to this challenge, existing hospitals are running out of fuel, power, and supplies to treat victims.

We are right to support Israel's right to defend itself, but we must not forget that innocent Gaza civilians are living under harsh, even desperate, conditions right now. Both the Israeli and Palestinian people deserve to live a life free of the threat of attack or psychological fear. It has always been my hope that our involvement in the region may be used to improve the lives of the people affected by the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Once again, Madam Speaker, my vote in favor of H. Res. 34 reflects my strong support for Israel, but the severe humanitarian plight of Gaza civilians is something we must not ignore. (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Jesse Jackson, Jr. (D-IL)

“I have been closely following the troubling events and escalating violence in the Middle East. We in the United States must continue to stand shoulder-to-shoulder in support of our friend and ally Israel as it defends itself against Hamas' unrelenting rocket attacks from Gaza.

“I'm encouraged by the recent cease-fire negotiations underway in the region. The talks must seek to end the intolerable rain of rockets on southern Israel and stop the violence and killing of Israelis and Palestinians. Until a cease-fire agreement is reached, I hope that every effort and scrupulous care continues to be taken to avoid the death of innocent civilians.

“I've long believed that the only route to a sustainable peace in the Middle East is through diplomatic means, not military might. The United States must once again take a leadership role and actively engage in the multilateral effort to build a permanent path to peace between the Israeli and the Palestinian people.” (Press Release, January 7, 2009)

Rep. Marcy Kaptur (D-OH)

"Madam Speaker, today I wish to comment on the bloodbath occurring in the Gaza. No human being can watch this carnage and not be reminded of the festering hatred that grows with each successive unleashing of violence in Israel, the Gaza, in the Palestinian territories that sadly rescars that tragic region.

In voting for the resolution today, I want to be clear I did not do so because I believe more war or violence is the solution to stability. In fact, more war will breed more retribution, as history surely demonstrates. I voted for the resolution because its preamble clearly states our goal is supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process.

The proportionality of Israel's response to Hamas' incessant terrorist rocket launches is lamentable. Over 750 Palestinians have now died, one-third of them women and children; there have been four Israeli soldiers killed; and in the last 7 years three Israeli casualties from the rocket launches from the Gaza into Israel. Immediately, there is a lack of adequate humanitarian relief from the world community, and for the victims, that is appalling. Two wrongs do not make a right.

My view is, the current administration has left Israel more vulnerable and less stable as hatreds grow toward it regionally. Our Nation's reputation, too, has been badly damaged globally.

I would like to enter into the Record today an editorial written by President Jimmy Carter called “The Unnecessary War,” the only President in the last 3 decades to achieve real, lasting peace in the

Middle East. There is a road forward. His life is proof the future of that region can be better than the past as development replaces war as the common denominator. But that will take courage. It will take perseverance. It will take more than congressional resolutions. It is why our hopes ride high at this moment with the incoming administration of President-elect Barack Obama."
(January 9, 2009)

Rep. Sheila Jackson-Lee (D-TX)

Madam Speaker, I rise to support H. Res. 34. War is ugly. That is why it took more than 6,000 or so rockets before Israel decided to defend herself. There is no doubt that we, as Members of Congress, wrap ourselves around the need for humanitarian aid and relief. We too feel the pain of loss of life.

But I think it is important to understand the resolution. It gives a wonderful roadmap for the decision of peace, a two-state solution, Israel and Palestine.

But what it does say, and what all of us have to commit ourselves to, is that no nation can stand for the extinguishing of other people in another sovereign nation. All Hamas has to do is to stand for the dignity and integrity of the Palestinian people, to allow Israel to survive and stand, to commit to its existence and to promote the survival of its people.

We must rally around people, women and children and families. But we cannot engage in peace unless all stand down.

This resolution is a roadmap for that. It is to encourage Egypt to continue in the peace process. It is to close the tunnels. It is to make sure that we are supporting the dignity of all.

I support this resolution. I beg the people of Palestine to stand up for dignity, peace, democracy and freedom for all. (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH)

Washington - "Today I sent a letter to Secretary General Ban ki-Moon urging the United Nations to establish an independent inquiry of Israel's war against Gaza. The attacks on civilians represent collective punishment, which is a violation of Article 33 of the

Fourth Geneva Convention (<http://www.unhchr.ch/html/menu3/b/92.htm>). The perpetrators of attacks against Israel must also be brought to justice, but Israel cannot create a war against an entire people in order to attempt to bring to justice the few who are responsible. The Israeli leaders know better. The world community, which has been very supportive of Israel's right to security and its right to survive, also has a right to expect Israel to conduct itself in adherence to the very laws which support the survival of Israel and every other nation," Kucinich said.

"Israel is leveling Gaza to strike at Hamas, just as they pulverized south Lebanon to strike at Hezbollah. Yet in both cases civilian populations were attacked, countless innocents killed or

injured, infrastructure targeted and destroyed, and civil law enforcement negated. All this was, and is, disproportionate, indiscriminate mass violence in violation of international law. Israel is not exempt from international law and must be held accountable. It is time for the UN to not just call for a cease-fire, but for an inquiry as to Israel's actions.”

According to published news reports, since the commencement of aerial strikes, over 300 Palestinians have been killed and approximately 1,400 have been wounded. The dead include 20 children under the age of 16--nearly half of them killed while on a school bus, according to the United Nations--and 9 women. The attack aggravated a humanitarian crisis wrought by the Israeli-imposed blockade of food, fuel, and medical supplies. With a population of 1.5 million people, the Gaza Strip is among the most densely populated territories in the world. (Press Release, December 29, 2008)

Sen. Patrick Leahy (D-VT)

Mr. President, S. Res. 10, the resolution that was adopted today reaffirming U.S. support for Israel, is factually accurate. No one here doubts our commitment to Israel's security, or Israel's right to defend itself from Hamas rocket attacks. But the resolution, unfortunately, presents an incomplete response to the situation in Gaza. With so much at stake for the United States, for Israel and for the world, we owe the American people and all concerned a clear-eyed, forthright and constructive discussion of such vital matters as these.

Hamas' unilateral decision to break the ceasefire was deplorable. It is clear that rather than work for peace, Hamas used the ceasefire to amass more powerful and longer range weapons. Its actions should be universally condemned, and they will achieve nothing positive for the cause of the Palestinian people. Those who have collaborated in supplying weapons that are being used to terrorize and harm innocent civilians in Israel are complicit in the suffering and destruction that has occurred on both sides.

For its part, Israel used the ceasefire to pressure Hamas through a blockade that, in the absence of a long-term strategy, has caused extreme hardship for the Palestinian people collectively in Gaza but done nothing to change Hamas' militant policies. The blockade was not coupled with an effective strategy to address the underlying causes of the conflict.

In the past 14 days, according to the United Nations, 758 Palestinians have died, including 257 children, as a result of Israel's military operations, and thousands more have been injured. Palestinian homes, schools and other civilian infrastructure have been demolished. Among Israelis, 3 civilians have been killed, and 7 soldiers have died. Israeli homes have also been badly damaged from Hamas rocket fire. The UN Relief and Works Agency, which is the principal humanitarian organization functioning in Gaza, suspended its operations earlier today due to risks to the safety of its personnel as a result of Israeli attacks which killed two of its workers and injured one.

As has been said here repeatedly, Israel has the right to defend itself. And I have no doubt that the Israeli Defense Forces, using powerful weapons supplied by the United States, can achieve tactical victories in Gaza by damaging Hamas' military capabilities.

But the right response is one that will, over the long term, make Israel more secure, and that will be achieved only when Israel is accepted by its neighbors. Those of us who have long worked to support Israel should not lose sight of this crucial goal and this bigger picture. This escalation will, I fear, have the opposite effect. The widening use of force has implications for Israel's long-term security that should concern each of us. This approach may increase support among Palestinians for Hamas as well as anger and resentment toward Israel and the United States within Arab countries and around the world.

Israel seeks to deal a fatal blow to Hamas militants, to bomb them into submission and moderation. If our country were attacked in a similar way by one of our neighbors we might respond the same way. But there is little if any reason to believe these tactics can work. This latest escalation, with bombs falling and tank artillery striking in heavily populated areas where civilians – more than half of whom are children – have no means of escape, obviously and tangibly is providing ammunition to extremists, inside and outside of Gaza. And in doing so it increases the dangers to both soldiers and civilians – Israeli and Palestinian – and of miring Israel in an open-ended mission in Gaza resulting in far more destruction and loss of innocent life than we have seen so far. Ultimately, extremism is what has hindered a political resolution that ends this conflict with two secure states living side by side.

There are some who may argue that the collapse of the recent ceasefire proves that Hamas will only respond to force. Hamas has abused the ceasefire, but that is not the only lesson from the collapse. Any clear-eyed analysis will show that a ceasefire cannot succeed – indeed, it will be exploited by Israel's enemies – if it is treated as an end in itself instead of as an opportunity to materially improve the humanitarian situation and to undertake serious negotiations to end the conflict.

There are broadly acknowledged immediate steps that must be taken: put a meaningful ceasefire in place, stop the smuggling of weapons into Gaza, and open crossings into Gaza to facilitate the flow of licit goods and services.

But beyond that, history has shown that absent an inclusive, diplomatic process that effectively addresses the core interests of both Israelis and Palestinians, the cycle of violence will continue. Preconditions are an obstacle to that process in the Middle East as much as they were for another seemingly intractable conflict, in Northern Ireland.

Others have asked these questions, which are worth repeating: Does the Gaza war improve Israel's long-term, or even short-term, security? Was it realistic and in Israel's long-term interests to expect Hamas to accept Israel in advance of negotiations, rather than push for a total cessation of the use of violence and blockade, followed by negotiations? Was it realistic to expect the ceasefire to hold while Gaza remained under siege, rife with hunger, illness, joblessness, and hopelessness, and while construction of settlements continued, and even accelerated, in the West Bank?

On January 6th, Secretary of State Rice spoke to the UN Security Council. I do not doubt the sincerity of her concern with the humanitarian situation in Gaza, or for the need for a ceasefire “that can endure and bring real security.” We all want that. But her words were noteworthy for what they said about the dismal failure of the Bush Administration’s approach to the Middle East conflict. Eight years were squandered and mishandled, and President-elect Obama faces a far more difficult situation than his predecessor inherited.

Mr. President, our credibility in the entire world has suffered immeasurably since 9/11. In particular our image in predominantly Muslim countries has been affected by the failure to advance a credible strategy to help resolve the Israel-Palestinian conflict. This has pronounced and obvious implications for our security, for Israel’s security, and for the entire Middle East region.

At this time of great opportunity in America to change our policies and make a true contribution to peace in the Middle East, we should be careful when we adopt resolutions on subjects as sensitive as this to be cognizant of the history of the region and the complexities of the situation. Above all, our goal should be to enhance our role as a force for peace and our ability to advance our Nation’s interests.

Rep. Dave Loebsack (D-IA)

Washington, D.C., Jan 9 - Congressman Dave Loebsack (IA-02) released the following statement after voting in support of H.Res. 34.

“I would first like to extend my deepest sympathies to the families of the innocent civilians who have lost their lives in the current conflict in Gaza and call on both sides to do all they can to protect civilian populations. Today I joined my colleagues in the House of Representatives in passing a resolution calling for an immediate and durable ceasefire to end the current conflict in Gaza and protect innocent civilians on both sides. I strongly believe that going forward the United States Administration must actively work with the international community to revitalize negotiations to achieve a lasting peace that allows for the passage of humanitarian aid, brings an end to arms trafficking, promotes security and democracy, and results in the State of Israel and a democratic Palestinian state living peacefully side by side.” (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Eric Massa (D-NY)

Washington, DC – New Member of the House Armed Services Committee Congressman Eric Massa today issued the following statement regarding the violence in Gaza.

"The United States and our allies must push for a complete and immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. A ceasefire must include an end to the continued firing of rockets into Israel. Israel has a duty to defend its citizens, Arab and Jew alike. However, military action alone cannot be the basis for an end to the rocket fire or for ultimate reconciliation among the parties. I believe that America must take an active role to stop the fighting, so that a diplomatic process that ultimately leads to a two-state solution between Israel and the Palestinians takes place." "I believe that once there is a ceasefire, it should be followed quickly by actions responding to the

humanitarian crisis in Gaza. I call on Hamas to recognize the State of Israel's right to exist, cease terrorist activity, and abide by all previous agreements between Israel and the Palestinians; and urge Israel and other nations to assist in the development of a fully functioning state of Palestine. This will help to create the conditions for a political initiative, led by the United States, the United Nations, and others, to create a negotiated end to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that offers real hope for stability and a decent future for all the peoples of the region." "I urge President Bush and the new Obama administration to work with our allies to create the conditions for peace, and to then use their full authority and influence to bring a just and permanent end to this tragic conflict. I will do all in my power to ensure President Obama has the resources, legal authority and political support necessary to achieve this objective."

Rep. Doris Matsui (D-CA)

"Israeli and Palestinian civilians deserve the same thing as all people: to raise their families in peaceful communities free from and unthreatened by violence. However, as long as Hamas engages Israel only with terrorism and rocket fire, prospects for peace will dim while people and families suffer. This is unacceptable for Israel and for the United States, which will continue to support Israel's right to defend itself and its citizens from attack. At the same time, Gaza must not become the scene of a humanitarian catastrophe, just as it must not be allowed to serve as a base for firing rockets at Israel.

"With this in mind, I urge the international community, Hamas's militants, and the Israeli government to agree to a cease-fire that halts hostilities and addresses the urgent humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The ultimate goal of such a cease-fire must be to lead to a sustainable peace agreement that dismantles Hamas's terrorist infrastructure, eases the alarming humanitarian situation in Gaza, and guarantees the safety and security of innocent Israelis and Palestinians alike. Achieving peace through a renewed emphasis on diplomacy and negotiation is critical in order to craft a long-term settlement that strengthens Israel's security, improves

Palestinians' quality of life, and breaks the region's cycle of violence and suffering." (Press Release, January 7, 2009)

Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN)

St. Paul, Minnesota –Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-04) released the following statement in response to the Gaza crisis and the lethal attacks by Hamas and Israeli:

"The war between Israel and Hamas in the Gaza Strip is the final blow to any Middle East peace process. Palestinians are being killed in alarming numbers while Hamas continues to fire rockets at Israel.

"The time has come for both sides to end the rockets, end the bombings, and end the restrictions on food, medicine and fuel – all of which inflict intolerable harm on innocent civilians on both sides.

“The new U.S. president, in partnership with European and Arab allies, must work to leverage all available diplomatic and political pressure on all parties to end the violence and start a legitimate dialogue about a future path to real peace.”

Congresswoman Betty McCollum (MN-4) serves on the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State Department and Foreign Operations and the Oversight and Government Reform Subcommittee on National Security and Foreign Affairs. (December 31, 2008)

Rep. James McGovern (D-MA)

“I believe the international community must press for an immediate cease-fire. A cease-fire would allow humanitarian assistance to be delivered most effectively and facilitate the revitalization of the peace process.

“I believe that the United States has dis-engaged from this process for far too long. President-elect Obama should indicate that he will appoint a Special Envoy to the region to revitalize stalled peace negotiations and to demonstrate the United States’ commitment to finding a long-term two-state solution.

“Every nation, including Israel, has the right to defend itself from attack. Hamas’s continued rocket attacks against Israeli civilians are unacceptable. Hamas should have agreed to extend the recently expired cease-fire. They must also recognize Israel’s right to exist and drop their objection to negotiate a two-state solution.” (Press Release, January 2, 2009)

Rep. Jerry McNerney (D-CA)

“Madam Speaker, I take this opportunity to express my concern about events in Israel and Gaza, and my support for Israel’s right to defend itself against rocket attacks launched from the Hamas controlled Gaza Strip. The region must have a meaningful resolution that will permanently end these rocket attacks and open a pathway to alleviate civilian suffering and

develop a secure and prosperous Palestinian society. Hamas’ rocket attacks targeting civilians triggered the current crisis. Any country is compelled to defend its civilians against attack.

“The situation in the region has reached a new level of violence, and each civilian death is tragic. The images of suffering innocents, especially children, in both the Gaza Strip and Israel are a stark reminder that it is long past time for this region to know peace. The United States must be deeply involved in the peace process while vigorously working for short and long term solutions that will provide security to Israel and the means for a better future to Palestinians.”

(Congressional Record, January 8, 2009)

Rep. George Miller (D-CA)

END TO FIGHTING IN GAZA STRIP NEEDED --

(House of Representatives - January 15, 2009)

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from California (Mr. *George Miller*) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. GEORGE MILLER of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my deep concern over the increasingly grave situation in the Gaza Strip and to express my disappointment that Congress has not spoken more clearly and forcibly in favor of a cease-fire. The latest fighting between Israel and Hamas has led to a humanitarian crisis. According to news reports, quoting various official sources on both sides of the battle, the impact on civilians in Gaza is severe and growing worse.

Madam Speaker, like every Member of this House, I support the right of Israel to defend itself and its people, and, like my colleagues, I strongly denounce Hamas' ongoing indiscriminate destabilizing rocket attacks against civilian populations in southern Israel and Hamas' clear intent to terrorize the people of Israel. In no uncertain terms, I call on Hamas to end its rocket attacks against Israel immediately.

But I also believe in no uncertain terms there must be a cease-fire between Hamas and Israel and it must commence immediately. The loss of life to children and their families, the vast destruction of homes and the enormous suffering in Gaza that is being caused by the escalation of this conflict must end.

Last week, the House spoke out on this latest conflict in the Middle East by passing H. Res. 34 that ``recognizes Israel's right to defend itself against the attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States' strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

I was disappointed that, as this body has done so often in the past, the House voted only to reiterate its support for Israel and its right to defend itself, rather than also to have used our considerable influence to pressure both sides to agree to a cease-fire in order to protect civilians on both sides caught in this conflict and in order to work toward a lasting resolution of this conflict that will lead to the protection and security of Israel.

I support much of the language in the resolution, but I regret that H.R. 34 in its entirety was not a correct statement for the House to make at the time. The question for the House and the international community is how the Israeli people will be able to live in peace and security without the constant threat of attack from Hamas and others and how the United States and all other nations can assist in achieving that outcome in a lasting manner.

The House has not weighed in on this question. The House of Representatives should throw its considerable weight behind the call for an immediate cease-fire between Israel and Hamas. The cease-fire is in the best interests of Israel and the United States.

The fact is that there has been a failure of political leadership that has led to this renewed and devastating fighting in Gaza. The Bush administration failed to adequately and successfully

address the Middle East conflict during its time in office and during the time in which we knew the cease-fire was coming to an end, and conditions might have been changed so that it could have been extended.

The international community has failed to adequately address the conflict between Israel and Hamas. Experts in the Middle East had warned that a conflict of this nature would eventually come, and will continue to come in the future if conditions on the ground do not change. Their warning went unheeded, and now a new and costly war has broken out.

Hamas rocket attacks against Israel are indefensible. But neither can the disproportionate military response by Israel be defended. The latest fighting was preceded by a lengthy and crushing blockade by Israel of Gaza that caused a humanitarian crisis. Hamas, unfortunately, chose to break the cease-fire and continue shelling of Israel. And Israel chose the breaking of the cease-fire to launch, as it should have, a defense of Israel, but unfortunately, with an all-out attack on Gaza.

Lost in all of this is the answer to the question of how the Israeli people can be assured the protection they deserve. The rocket attacks against Israel continue, albeit lessened now, despite the enormous firepower brought against Hamas by Israel. There is no clear answer as to how Israel will bring this conflict to an end in Gaza or clear what Israel's ultimate goals are in this conflict.

Only a cease-fire and a new international commitment to negotiate a cessation of hostilities between Hamas and Israel can protect the people of Israel. (January 15, 2009)

Rep. Jim Moran (D-VA)

“Madam Speaker, I will vote “present” on Resolution 34. While the intent of this resolution is to speak out against terrorism and to reiterate U.S. support for Israel's security, I am deeply concerned that the message it sends may be contrary to the best interests of both Israel and the Palestinians. A solution to this crisis in the Middle East must be diplomatic; it will not be achieved by military force.

The resolution contains many facts, but it omits others that are important. The United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs reported January 8 that since the Israeli military operation “Cast Lead” began, 758 Palestinians have been killed, including 60 women and 257 children. More than 3,000 Palestinians have been injured. Israeli media reported that 11 Israelis have been killed, most of them soldiers, 3 from “friendly fire.” Of paramount concern today is to stop the loss of life, to allow medical supplies and personnel to enter Gaza, and to provide emergency care to those who have been injured.

The citizens of Gaza, most of whom are refugees, have nowhere to go. They are prevented from fleeing into Israel or Egypt and are cornered in one of the most populated areas in the world.

This resolution emphasizes Israel's right to defend itself. Of course it has that right. But we also need to stand strongly in solidarity with both Israelis and Palestinians who want peace and an end to the horrific cycle of violence that manifests itself so horribly in Gaza today. I agree that the ultimate goal of the United States is a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will ensure the welfare, security, and survival of the State of Israel as a Jewish and democratic state with secure borders, and a viable, independent, and democratic Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel. Unfortunately, I do not believe this resolution moves us closer to this goal, and because of this, I vote present.” (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Gwen Moore (D-WI)

Madam Speaker, Israel is a strong ally of our country and has a right to defend itself and I have voted on a number of times--along with a large majority of my colleagues in the House--to make clear our support of that right. According to one estimate, as many as one million Israelis live in range of rockets that have been fired from Gaza by militants. No one questions the responsibility or right of a sovereign nation to protect its people.

However, the deaths of innocent civilians wherever they may occur concerns me. I join my colleagues in condemning all acts of violence and hostilities against civilians and acts of terrorism. While Hamas may be indifferent to the suffering of Palestinians and Israelis as a result of its actions, the rest of the world must not share that indifference.

It is distressing to see this volatile region again paralyzed by a new chapter of a seemingly endless cycle of retributive violence in which no side really wins and innocent civilians lose the most. We must push to break this destructive cycle. The U.S. regional actors, and the international community all need to move quickly to defuse this situation and help to reach a cease-fire by all sides while addressing the security and humanitarian issues that cannot be allowed to continue to fester.

The unfolding humanitarian crisis in Gaza and the firing of rockets into Israel do not serve the best interest of anyone truly concerned with securing permanent peace in the region. That is why it is even more important that this House take up a resolution that makes a serious call for and helps strongly support ongoing diplomatic efforts to bring an end to the violence, demands greater U.S. leadership and engagement in those efforts, and recognizes the great loss suffered by the Israeli and Palestinian people as a result of the violence and urges a swift end to that violence. Unfortunately, the bill before us today is not such a resolution.

Hamas' own actions time and time again show that it is a threat to regional and international peace. This is not in dispute. The House has rightly condemned Hamas time and time again including passage last March of H. Res. 951--which I supported.

However, I have several concerns about other aspects of the resolution before us today. At a time of increasing international concern about the situation in Gaza highlighted by diplomatic efforts

under way at the UN, by the EU, and the Arab League--particularly a proposal put forth by Egypt and France--and the passage just last night by the UN Security Council of a resolution calling for an immediate cease-fire, I fear that this may be the wrong time for a resolution that does little to support efforts to halt the conflict.

The Security Council resolution called urgently for an "immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire, leading to the full withdrawal of Israeli forces from Gaza." I am disappointed that the resolution before the House today does not support the UN's call for an immediate and verifiable cease-fire by both sides.

When a clear international consensus and diplomatic efforts are beginning to coalesce and work towards a solution, why would the U.S. Congress want to consider a resolution that takes a sharply different tack?

The resolution before us also differs in a number of ways even from a similar resolution that the Senate passed just yesterday. That Senate resolution takes a much more serious approach and puts a greater and much needed emphasis on the proactive role the U.S. needs to play to bring this latest crisis to a close. The U.S. has a vast array of diplomatic and other tools that are at the disposal of the President and his foreign policy advisers to help resolve international crises such as this. Now is the time to open that toolbox and actively use those tools.

If anything has been clear from the last eight years it is that when U.S. does not lead and stay in engaged in regional diplomacy, the situation in the region will not get better.

The EU, the UN, the Arab League all recognize that Israel's military operations must be supplemented and supplanted by a diplomatic resolution that will last. That is why the Egyptians and the French are expending considerable efforts--in the absence of U.S. leadership--to forge a cease-fire agreement that meets Israel's needs, namely ending the firing of rockets into Israel and preventing Hamas from rearming while also addressing the humanitarian needs of Gazans. Just yesterday, Secretary Rice expressed verbal support for this initiative, stating that these efforts "should not just be applauded, but must be supported" by the international community. But the resolution fails to even bring it up.

The resolution before the House today also expresses support for "diminishing the appeal and influence of extremists in the Palestinian territories and strengthen moderate Palestinians who are committed to a secure and lasting peace." However, this resolution by its lack of a call for U.S. engagement and lack of recognition of the suffering of civilians actually undermines this goal--one that I have long advocated and supported--both in its tone and substance. The resolution ignores or fails to apprehend the tremendous damage that is being done to the efforts of moderates--either presently or in the future--by the ongoing conflict that according to one report has generated "incredible bitterness and anger" in the region. To expect our moderate friends in the Middle East to succeed in such an environment is foolhardy at best.

A cease-fire does not diminish or hinder Israel's right to defend itself. It does help get us back on the path to finding a political and diplomatic solution that will address Israel's security needs and lead to long-term security and peace. A cease-fire is not an end itself but is desirable as a means to halt violence and chaos in the immediate term while creating room to assure humanitarian aid and for renewed and sustained multilateral negotiations for a sustainable peace.

Congress must speak out to help stop this latest crisis in the Middle East but in a way that our message is fair, tough, and smart and that makes clear that the U.S.--while supporting Israel's right to self-defense-- can be and is an honest broker in the region. I fear that this resolution fails to meet that standard.

The best support that we can give our close friend and ally Israel is by being an impartial and honest broker that can work with all interested parties in the region, Israelis and Palestinians alike. I am wary about continuing to take actions that hinder the ability for the U.S. to be seen as such a mediator and which may throw more obstacles in the way of the incoming administration foreign policy aims.

The ongoing military operations by Israel cannot and should not substitute for a credible long-term diplomatic solution reached with the help of the international agreement between the Israelis and Palestinians that meets the needs and aspirations of both sides that will prevent the return to an endless cycle of violence that guarantees that "security" and peace remains elusive.

Innocent people on both sides want nothing more than to live normal lives with peace and dignity. While I cannot support this resolution in its current form, I strongly encourage the administration and the international community to undertake robust diplomacy to mediate a cross-border cease-fire and to continue to engage in constructive activities, statements, and resolutions will help bring peace to the region and address Israel's real security needs. (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Richard Neal (D-MA)

(SPRINGFIELD, MASS) Congressman Richard E. Neal released the following statement today regarding the crisis in the Gaza Strip:

"I join President Bush, President-elect Obama and the bi-partisan leadership of the United States Congress in support of Israel's right to defend itself against the rocket and mortar attacks by the terrorist group Hamas. In the past six weeks, more than 600 rockets and mortars have been fired from the Gaza Strip at innocent Israeli civilians. Nearly 500, 000 Israelis are with range of Hamas' deadly arsenal. The State of Israel is a sovereign nation that has a right to defend itself. And there is no doubt that the United States and its allies holds Hamas responsible for the current crisis in the region.

For many years, I have been an outspoken supporter of the efforts to bring peace and security to the Middle East. A negotiated settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians is the only way to resolve the conflict between the two parties. I welcome the call for an immediate ceasefire and support humanitarian assistance for Palestinians in Gaza. But the attacks and aggression on innocent Israelis by Hamas have to stop immediately." (Press Release, December 31, 2008)

Rep. John Olver (D-MA)

Washington, D.C. - Congressman John W. Olver (D, MA-1) released the following statement today regarding the situation in Gaza:

“With grave concern I have been following the latest developments in the Gaza Strip. The people of Israel have a right to be safe in their homes and daily lives.

I strongly support Israel’s right to defend itself as well as the right of Palestinians to realize a viable and sustainable state.

I call upon the United States, the United Nations Security Council, and the broader international community to secure an immediate and lengthy cease-fire and encourage both sides to begin serious negotiations to avoid repetition of this latest round of violence.

Right now, immediate humanitarian assistance—especially food and medical supplies—is needed for Palestinian civilians in Gaza. In the future, the United States must lead the effort towards achieving a permanent and sustainable peace agreement; only then will Israelis and Palestinians be able to live in peace and security.” (Press Release, December 31, 2008)

Rep. Bill Pascrell, Jr (D-NJ)

"Madam Speaker, nearly 9,000 rockets, missiles, and mortars have been fired into Israel since 2001, terrorizing the Israeli people. More than 6,000 of them have fallen since Israel withdrew entirely from the Gaza Strip and Hamas took over its leadership in 2005. The range of these rockets continues to grow, putting more of Israel's population in danger.

The humanitarian situation in Gaza also worsens by the day, and scores of civilians have been hurt or killed in the fighting. Hamas terrorists embed themselves in private homes, schools, mosques, hospitals, and use innocent Palestinians as human shields.

I fully support Israel's right to defend itself against the constant barrage of attacks from Hamas. However, it is imperative that both the Hamas government in Gaza and the State of Israel stop this cycle of violence that has caused hundreds of casualties, before it gets worse. Israelis in Southern Israel and Palestinians in Gaza live in constant fear for their lives, and this is unacceptable.

The Bush Administration must immediately take all necessary measures, in conjunction with the world community, to broker a peaceful and sustainable resolution to this volatile situation.

Should the President heed this call, it will bolster the incoming Obama Administration's efforts as it advocates for a lasting peace.

Military action will not result in an enduring resolution of these long simmering tensions. It is only through diplomacy and a strengthening of the Israeli Palestinian reconciliation process that a sustainable two state solution will be achieved. The violence must stop and the healing process begin, before more civilians are hurt and more lives are destroyed." (January 9, 2009)

Speaker of the House of Representatives Nancy Pelosi (D-CA)

Washington, D.C. – Speaker Nancy Pelosi spoke on the House floor this morning in support of H.Res 34, which recognizes Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirms the United States’ strong support for Israel, and supports the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Below are the Speaker’s remarks:

“Mr. Speaker, the resolution before the House 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.”

Rep. David Price (D-NC)

For observers of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict committed to a peaceful and lasting two-state resolution, the conflict in Gaza brings the temptation to throw one's hands in the air in despair. Mistaken assumptions and lessons left unlearned seem to guide each of the protagonists down a course that is at odds with the long-term interests of both Israelis and Palestinians.

We can't help but lament another cycle of retributive violence -- for the terrible toll it takes on both sides and because we know it is not the way forward. Yet exasperation and passivity are indulgences that the United States and the world can ill afford.

For its part, Hamas has again proven that it would rather fight than govern or tend to the needs of Gazans, making it exceedingly difficult to envision it as a serious partner at the negotiating table. Israel, while unquestionably justified in its move to put an end to the daily barrage of rockets falling upon its citizens, seems to have forgotten the lessons of the 2006 Lebanon war, during which its use of massive force alienated the Arab world and turned Hezbollah into freedom fighters in the eyes of many Lebanese. And the Bush administration once again offers little: only an unconditional green light to follow the fight, now a full-scale ground war, wherever it leads.

Risks all around

It is difficult to imagine how the current conflict might ultimately lead to a just and lasting peace. Hamas, though militarily debilitated, is not likely to disappear as a political force or to suddenly prove more pliable in negotiations. It may become more rather than less difficult to bring Gaza under the authority of President Mahmoud Abbas and Fatah, lest they be seen as capitalizing on the misery wrought by the fighting. And Israel, while addressing a key short-term security

objective, risks far-reaching damage to the peace process that is essential to its most critical long-term security objective: a resolution to the conflict.

Equally troubling, the overwhelming force of its bombardment has buttressed support for extremist elements, like Hezbollah and the Iranian government, that threaten Israeli and regional security.

As ominous as the picture may be, it is strongly in the interests of our own country to ensure that the architecture of the peace process is not irreparably damaged. To do so, the United States should take several immediate steps, even as the Bush administration draws anemically to a close.

- First, the administration, working with the international community, must take swift action to avert a massive humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Gazans have been on the verge of a humanitarian meltdown for months; the bombing of border tunnels -- which have been used to smuggle food and humanitarian supplies, in addition to weapons -- pushes Gaza further toward collapse.
- Second, the administration should urgently engage Israel, along with regional allies such as Egypt, Jordan and Saudi Arabia, in putting together the framework for a sustainable long-term ceasefire, not simply a temporary halt to fighting. Such a framework must protect Israel from the persistent rocket fire on Sderot and from Hamas's stockpiling of deadly weapons. But it also must provide relief from the devastating embargo on Gaza. To be effective, it must involve Egypt and regional partners as mediators and monitors.

Seek a just peace

Coming on the heels of the 2006 Lebanon war, Israel's military actions in Gaza have had the unfortunate collateral consequence of generating substantial domestic political unrest for many of Israel's friendliest Arab neighbors, particularly Egypt. The United States will need to walk a fine diplomatic line, encouraging Arab nations to lead Hamas toward a sustainable ceasefire while empowering them to advocate for the just peace their citizens demand.

- Finally, both President Bush and, as soon as he takes office, President-elect Barack Obama should explicitly express the unwavering U.S. commitment to a viable peace process and undertake diplomacy toward that end. How the present conflict is waged, and on what terms it is halted, will be especially consequential on the Palestinian side of the equation. The United States, Israel and moderate Sunni regimes have not done enough to help Abbas and Fatah gain credibility, and that task now is even more urgent and challenging. As for Hamas, while its military capabilities may be downgraded by the conflict, its political stock may rise. The organization and its constituency must be taken into account, directly and indirectly, in any viable process.

These steps will not resolve the conflict. But they will help preserve the possibility of a future peace, a possibility that is now teetering on the brink. (January 6, 2009 – Printed in local newspaper)

Rep. Nick Rahall (D - WV)

I thank the distinguished chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee for yielding me the time and certainly respect his work on this resolution. We have talked about this issue numerous times over our careers in this body.

Madam Speaker, I am saddened by the recent escalation and fighting over the past few weeks in the Middle East. I condemn the Hamas attacks and recent air strikes in southern Lebanon into Israel. My hope is that all sides can take a step back, deescalate the fighting, and work together to renew the cease-fire agreement that expired on December 19. At the same time, humanitarian aid and assistance should be allowed to reach those in the region that need it the most, particularly civilian victims of the conflict.

Military action alone is not going to be a solution to the problems in the Middle East; we all know that. Working towards a lasting, peaceful solution to these conflicts by addressing the root causes is in the best interests of the United States.

The current fighting is not in the best interests of the United States. Only the extremists on both sides are the winners. Those moderates in the middle, both in Israel and on the Palestinian side, are the real losers in the current fighting.

Make no mistake about it. This campaign was planned some time ago, not just at the expiration of the cease-fire in December. Recent events in Israel show that the prime minister election coming up in February certainly have been a major factor in these air strikes, witnessing meteoric rise of Defense Minister Ehud Barak from almost nothing in the polls to now leading for prime minister of Israel.

So make no mistake about it, there are a variety of factors on all sides that come into play. There's no political will on the Palestinian side. There's no political side on the Israeli side to reach a real agreement in addressing the root causes.

This resolution, while there's nothing in it that can be denied, is not in my opinion in the best interests of resolving this conflict. We applaud what happened in the United Nations last night, but we know that what happens in the United Nations is far different than what happens on the ground in the region.

We urge the Egyptians, along with the Palestinian Authority, to reach an agreement in Cairo, as they are negotiating as we speak between Israel and Hamas, so that we can start addressing the smuggling of arms and the root causes of the conflict in the region. (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Charles Rangel (D-NY)

“Israel, like any other sovereign nation, has the right to provide for her own security against terrorist campaigns. A cease fire does not seem plausible until the rocket attacks by Hamas and the threat for future rocket attacks have ended. Of course, it is in everyone's best interest to end the constant threat of violence. We must do more to build an environment where we can grow new economic opportunities for both sides which will provide Palestinians with a sense of economic hope and allow Israelis to live in peace. I am confident and hopeful that President-elect Barack Obama will be able to bring together the peace loving people of the world in order to create economic and political stability for the Palestinian people and a two state solution without having to fear the terrorism instituted by Hamas.” (Press Release, December 30, 2008)

Sen. Jack Reed (D-RI)

“Like you, I am deeply concerned about the escalating violence and its toll on innocent civilians in the region.

I stand by Israel’s right to defend its citizens against rocket and mortar attacks by Hamas from Gaza, which have killed and injured many Israelis over the last several years. I also believe that Israel, like all states, has an obligation to restore security for its residents.

We need a cease fire that is durable and sustainable. I hope such an agreement can be reached quickly.

I believe that the United States needs to be energetically engaged in bringing the parties together to form a long-lasting agreement between Israel and the Palestinians and that the United States has an obligation to support the emergence of a peaceful, democratic Palestinian leadership.

I continue to support the implementation of a two-state solution, in which Israelis and Palestinians agree to live as neighbors in peace and security. I remain hopeful that under the incoming Administration, the United States will encourage the parties to accomplish this necessary goal.” (Constituent Letter, January 4, 2009)

Rep. Loretta Sanchez (D-CA)

"Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my concerns regarding H. Res. 34. I do not think that this resolution provides a complete picture of the conflict in Gaza and as a result, I will be voting present on this resolution. I am particularly concerned that this resolution does not address the core cause of the crisis, and I am not confident that this resolution will be beneficial to improving the situation in Gaza.

I have grave concerns about Hamas's alarming history of violence. However, in order to resolve this crisis it is imperative that we encourage both Israel and Hamas to pursue a peaceful resolution and come to a sustainable cease-fire.

Today marks the 14th day of the Gaza war. Over 700 people have been killed by both Israeli and Hamas military actions. International aid workers are reporting that they are unable to access the Gaza civilians and the United Nations has suspended its aid operations following the death of a U.N. official. I believe that a bipartisan resolution should have more fully addressed these challenges and stressed the need for both parties to cease all fire and fulfill their obligations under the Road Map peace plans.

This weekend I will be meeting with a number of relevant organizations and community leaders from my district to discuss the current crisis in Gaza. Through these meetings I hope to continue to learn more about the status of the ongoing situation and consider the ways in which the United States can develop a proactive plan that will both end this current conflict and bring long-term peace and stability to the region." (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)

Given the constant rocket fire from Hamas, particularly since Hamas declared an official end to the six-month ceasefire, Israel's response is completely understandable. For years, the children of Sderot and surrounding communities and their parents have been terrorized by these attacks and forced to live in fear, regularly huddled in bomb shelters. Now those rockets plus more sophisticated ones are coming more frequently and endangering even more Israeli communities and families.

Israel has an absolute right to defend herself. That is not in question. However, I am concerned that the renewed violence will make long-term peace and security for Israel even more elusive and create greater instability in the region.

This untenable situation is crying out for a diplomatic solution, one in which the United States plays a leadership role, calling on the international community, including nations in the region, to participate. That solution requires that the Palestinians recognize Israel's right to exist and abandon terrorism, and that both sides agree to a two-state solution that achieves both physical and economic security. I urge the Obama Administration from its first days to re-engage in active diplomacy, not only to end the current hostilities and alleviate humanitarian suffering, but to work toward a lasting peace, one that guarantees Israel's survival as a Jewish democratic state. (January 9, 2009)

Rep. Joe Sestak (D-PA)

"Israel has the right to ensure its security as it has done in response to the unremitting rocket attacks from Gaza by Hamas. The United States must continue to support the defense of its valued ally Israel; however, we must also work much more effectively than we have in the recent past to achieve a long term diplomatic resolution to the overall Israeli-Palestinian conflict. This requires the U.S. to take a much greater leadership role in the Middle East, beginning with bringing a swift end to this ongoing conflict. Then, leading a regional effort, the United States

must use this conflict's peaceful resolution as an opportunity to build a path to permanent peace in the Middle East."

"When I served in the White House as Director of Defense Policy in the Clinton Administration, I saw the value of U.S. leadership efforts to engage in diplomacy around the world, including with Israel and the Palestinians. We need to assume the mantle of leadership in that region because a safe and secure Israel is necessary not only for the people of Israel, but also for the region, the United States and its allies and friends." (Press Release, January 2, 2009)

Rep. Niki Tsongas (D-MA)

WASHINGTON, DC – January 7, 2009 – Congresswoman Niki Tsongas released the following statement regarding the situation in Gaza.

"Ever since Israel withdrew its forces and removed its settlements from Gaza in 2005, its citizens have been subjected to a steady bombardment of rockets launched by Hamas. As is the case with any sovereign nation, Israel has the indisputable right to defend herself and her citizens. Absent assurances that Hamas end these terrorist acts, the United States will continue to support efforts by Israel to dismantle the Hamas terrorist infrastructure.

"I am grateful that Israeli and Palestinian officials have agreed to a brief cessation of hostilities so that humanitarian aid can reach civilians affected by the fighting in Gaza. It is my hope that this agreement will hold, will lead to a more lasting cease fire, and that innocent civilians on both sides will be spared further violence. But in order for any cease fire agreement to become permanent, Hamas must permanently end the rocket attacks which have threatened Israeli civilians for years.

"The incoming Administration must play an active and constructive role to establish a lasting peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. I support a two state solution that enables the Palestinian people to realize their aspirations of self governance while assuring Israel's security. But such a solution will be impossible to achieve until Hamas renounces violence, accepts Israel's right to exist, and agrees to abide by past Israeli-Palestinian accords." (Press Release, January 7, 2009)

Sen. Jim Webb (D-VA)

On January 8, by unanimous consent, the Senate passed Senate Resolution 10, expressing the Sense of the Senate on the conflict in Gaza. While the resolution affirms U.S. support for Israel's security and condemns the Hamas rocket attacks, I believe it presented an incomplete response to the situation in Gaza.

I am very concerned about the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza. Reports from the United Nations and from humanitarian organizations citing lack of access for humanitarian assistance in Gaza are very troubling. We here in the U.S. should be insisting that the situation be rectified immediately and permanently. Israel indeed has a right to defend itself from Hamas rocket attacks, but in my view a meaningful ceasefire must be brokered to stop the escalation of violence, followed by a serious conflict resolution process that involves all parties in the region.

To state the obvious, a lasting solution to the conflict in the Middle East is critical to global peace and security. Without an inclusive, diplomatic process that effectively addresses the core interests of both Israelis and Palestinians, the cycle of violence will obviously continue. It is my strong belief that the United States and the international community must place stability in this region as a top priority.

As a member of the Senate Committee on Foreign Relations, please be assured my staff and I are monitoring this serious situation very closely and will work with the incoming Obama Administration toward bringing such stability into reality. (January 12, 2009)

Sen. Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI)

Newport, R.I. - U.S. Senator Sheldon Whitehouse (D-RI) issued the following statement on the conflict in Gaza: " Hamas has cast aside a cease-fire agreement brokered by the Egyptians and indiscriminately targeted Israeli civilians with a barrage of rockets and mortars, dragging the Israeli and Palestinian peoples back into the crossfire of war and leaving Israel with little choice but to respond with force. Israel must defend its people against these attacks. "Now, like all Americans, I hope for strong diplomatic intervention that will bring these hostilities to an end and facilitate humanitarian assistance to those suffering in and around Gaza. I regret that the Bush Administration's years of neglect allowed the peace process to deteriorate so gravely, and I'm confident that President-Elect Obama's Administration will bring a new commitment and new leadership to address the wider conflict in the Middle East." (Press Release, January 4, 2009)

Rep. Lynn Woolsey (D-CA)

Washington, DC – Congresswoman Lynn Woolsey (D-CA) today issued the following statement after the vote on H.Res. 34, a bill expressing the sense of the Congress on the current conflict in Gaza:

"As someone who has always been committed to a two-state solution in the Middle East that guarantees Israel's security and provides self-determination for the Palestinians, I do not believe that the resolution put forth today succeeds in moving us closer to either goal. It will neither increase the security of the Israeli civilians at risk of rocket attacks, nor will it address the immediate and dire humanitarian needs of the thousands of Palestinians who have been caught in the recent crossfire. Instead of simply condemning the violence, we must act to end it. The

United States must join with its international partners, and use every resource at our disposal, to bring both sides together in adopting an immediate cease-fire and an end to hostilities. In addition, we must recommit ourselves to working with all parties to find a long-term solution to this crisis, which has unfortunately been all but ignored by President Bush and his administration over the past eight years. The US must be an honest broker in these negotiations and today's resolution is untimely in light of round the clock diplomatic efforts to obtain a cease-fire." (Press Release, January 9, 2009)