

House of Representatives Approves Gaza Resolution

By Dan Robinson
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Emotional statements made clear that while they strongly support the right of Israel to defend itself, lawmakers are troubled by Palestinian civilian casualties in Gaza.

Howard Berman chairs the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

"I have no trouble justifying the war that Israel has undertaken, but I am deeply troubled by the suffering, destruction, and loss of innocent life that it inevitably entails," he said.

Similar to one approved by the Senate, the House resolution recognized Israel's right to self-defense against what it called unceasing aggression by Hamas.

It said the lives of innocent civilians must be protected to the maximum extent possible, and expressed condolences to Palestinian and Israeli victims and their families.

A U.N. Security Council resolution approved Thursday failed to end fighting in Gaza. The United States abstained, but did not exercise its veto power.

Florida Republican Ileana Ros-Lehtinen asserted that the United Nations has continued to apply a bias against Israel.

"It passed a resolution that did not even mention rocket attacks against innocent Israeli civilians, did not even mention Hamas and its war crimes, and called for an immediate cease-fire, not a sustainable cease-fire," he said.

Mike Pence is a Republican from Indiana.

"Israel has a right and Israel has a duty to defend her people against the attacks of a terrorist group that victimizes the people of Gaza and Israelis on her borders," he said.

Minnesota Democrat Keith Ellison, one of only two Muslims in Congress, was among 22 members voting present. He said the resolution did not speak strongly enough about how to move Mideast peace efforts forward.

"This resolution does not do enough to move towards a stable and durable peace in the Middle East," said Ellison.

Democrat Jane Harman and Republican Ed Royce focused on what they called Iran's role in the Gaza conflict.

HARMAN: "Hamas ability to strike Israeli cities is continuing evidence that it has been receiving illicit arms for use against Israel, no doubt with the complicity of its sponsors in Iran."

ROYCE: "More delays in terms of taking out Hamas only work in the favor of the Islamic state over in Iran at this point, and they are helping to provide [Hamas with] the rockets."

Members of Congress have been expressing hope that the incoming Obama administration will undertake new aggressive efforts for peace.

California Democrat Susan Davis.

"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," said Davies.

House Speaker Nancy Pelosi said this week she hopes the new U.S. administration can move efforts forward for peace, and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.