

consistently showered with Hamas rockets and northern Israel has been hit by rockets from Lebanon.

Like all sovereign nations, Israel has not only a right, but moreover, an obligation, to ensure the safety and security of her citizens.

Let me be very clear. Israel's response, her defense of her people, is in reaction to the hundreds of Hamas missiles that were targeted at Israeli citizens throughout the flimsy ceasefire of 2008.

Hamas's leaders, choosing terror against Israel over the welfare of the Palestinian people, have chosen violence over peace.

And while Hamas has been going out of its way to kill innocent Israelis, Israel has been going above and beyond—even putting itself at risk—to protect innocent Palestinians.

Specifically, Israel drops leaflets and makes phone calls to targeted Palestinian areas to warn citizens they are in danger, even if this means losing the element of surprise and putting the lives of its own soldiers at risk.

In contrast, Hamas deliberately attacks Israeli civilians and uses its own people as human shields.

In addition, Israel has been facilitating the transfer of significant amounts of humanitarian supplies to the Gaza Strip; delivering 15,000 tons of aid over the past week and a half.

Hamas, on the other hand, has stolen some of those humanitarian medical supplies from civilians to give to their gunmen.

Undeniably, the suffering is great in Israel and Gaza. Now is the time for us all to stand together in support of Israel and peace. I urge my colleagues to support this critical resolution, and pray that Hamas stops firing rockets into Israel, and starts working towards peace instead of terror.

Ms. LORETTA SANCHEZ of California. 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.

Mr. DINGELL. 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.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of House Resolution 34, which reaffirms our Nation's strong unwavering support for Israel and its right to defend itself against missile attacks from Gaza.

As an ardent supporter of Israel and its fight against terrorism, I am well aware of the ongoing conflict between Israel and the Palestinians and am monitoring developments closely.

As any nation, Israel has every right to protect itself from terrorist attacks within its bor-

ders and across its borders to ensure the safety of its citizens from the threat of terrorism. As a sovereign nation, Israel has the right to defend itself just as our Nation and any of our allies would.

Throughout the past year, Hamas has launched an estimated 3,000 rockets into Israel and during that time the range of these rockets has increased striking further and further into Israel. The ultimate goal is peace, security and prosperity for the people of this troubled region, but there can be no peace when terrorists attack the Israeli people.

Israel is carefully targeting the Hamas leadership and its rocket launching capability, but as long as Hamas hides and operates within civilian locations there will be civilian casualties. That is regrettable, but as long as Hamas launches rockets into Israel, there will also be civilian casualties there.

Our Nation will continue to respond to terrorist attacks and threats on our Nation and our people and I would not expect the Israeli government to react any differently to these ongoing threats.

Madam Speaker, Israel remains our staunchest friend and ally in Middle East and we stand together with them as they endure this most recent assault against their freedom and liberty.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. Madam Speaker, I am proud to be an original cosponsor and strong supporter of House Resolution (H. Res.) 34 which expresses the United States House of Representatives strong support for and commitment to Israel and recognizes that Israel has a fundamental right to defend its citizens against violent attacks.

Back in 2005, I spoke to this House to express my profound concern about Israel's withdrawal from the Gaza Strip. I feared that Islamic radicals would exploit that opportunity to jump-start the peace process and instead use Gaza as a launching pad for attacks on Israel; undermining the peace process, exacerbating global and regional terrorism and moving the Middle East one step closer to all out war. I am sad to see that circumstances have proven that my concerns were justified.

There can be no negotiations with—and no concession to—terrorists like Hamas; who refuse to even accept Israel's right to exist. If the world wants calm to return to the Middle East it must speak with one voice—as this House is speaking with one voice today—and tell the leaders of Hamas, and their handlers in Tehran—that blame for this bloodshed falls squarely on their shoulders. To end that bloodshed—and to bring humanitarian relief to the people living in Gaza, Hamas must immediately end the rocket and mortar attacks against Israel and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure.

Israel and the United States have shared a special bond since the founding of the modern Jewish State in 1948. As a lone State fighting for freedom and democracy in a region dominated by authoritarian and military regimes, Israel is the only country in the Middle East that the United States can fully count on to stand firm against the terrorists and oppressors.

As we continue to fight against the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction in the region by rogue regimes, and work to halt the States who continue to sponsor terrorism, Israel stands as a lone and vital ally. Similarly, Israel stands as an important strategic partner

with regard to our joint efforts to stop the spread of Islamic radicalism.

We all support the cause of peace; we all want to see the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resolved but will we ever reach that goal if the rockets and mortars do not stop; that is the first step.

I strongly urge my colleagues to support H. Res. 34.

Mrs. LOWEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today as a proud cosponsor and strong supporter of H. Res. 34, a Resolution "Recognizing Israel's right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the U.S.'s strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process."

I believe unequivocally that Israel has the right and responsibility to defend itself and its citizens. I stand in support and solidarity with Israel's efforts to end Hamas' campaign of terror. For years, Hamas has fired thousands of rockets into Israel, murdering Israeli civilians and terrorizing peaceful communities. Earlier this year I traveled to the Western Negev and saw first-hand the trauma suffered by women and children who faced nearly daily rocket attacks from Gaza. While war is never a preferred option, after repeated calls to Hamas to end rocket attacks, Israel had no choice but to respond militarily to Hamas' breaking of the cease-fire.

During its operation in Gaza, Israel has taken extraordinary steps to prevent civilian casualties, including providing advanced warning to civilians about pending attacks of Hamas targets. I am dismayed and disgusted with Hamas' tactics of co-locating their terrorist infrastructure amongst the civilian population. My heart goes out to the families of the innocent civilians killed and wounded on both sides of the conflict; however, Hamas bears the responsibility for the loss of life and the humanitarian situation of residents of Gaza.

Hamas, which continues to deny Israel's right to exist, will stop at nothing to deny peace to the region, including exploiting and endangering Gaza civilians. I believe that Israel's operation to dismantle Hamas's terrorist infrastructure will provide space to reinvigorate support for the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. It is my hope that the Israeli operation will make it clear to Hamas that its attacks on Israeli communities must end so that negotiations toward a peaceful coexistence in the region can continue.

Ms. LEE of California. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my strong support of the right of Israel to exist and to defend itself and to condemn unequivocally the rocket attacks launched by Hamas on Israel. I believe there can be no military solution to this conflict, only a political solution reached by the parties assisted by the United States acting as an honest broker. Seldom do I vote present but I will in this case. Let me explain why.

First, the resolution ought to make it clear that the only way to remove the threat to Israel, and to the larger region, is to resolve these issues through an immediate cease-fire and commit the United States to high-level and sustained diplomacy in support of the Road Map and initiatives. This resolution does not address how to end the escalating violence.

Second, the resolution should offer concrete steps to be taken immediately to alleviate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza. The resolution is silent on this point.

The bottom line is there is absolutely no military resolution to the issues confronting this region—notwithstanding the acts of self-defense to which Israel has resorted.

That is why I renew my call for the administration to redouble its efforts in discharging its indispensable role as honest broker in the peace process needed to realize the two-state solution and secure Israel's right to peaceful co-existence and the right of the Palestinians to live in dignity.

Mr. CROWLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today to express my overwhelming support for Israel's right to defend her people against terrorist attacks.

Over the past 6 months, we have seen a relative calm between Israelis and Palestinians due to an Egyptian brokered cease-fire.

Unfortunately, however, this calm was used by Hamas to rearm themselves with more technologically-advanced rockets and weapons, which were smuggled through tunnels from Egypt and over the Syrian border.

When the cease-fire expired on December 19, 2008, Hamas refused to extend it and began to fire its updated arsenal of rockets deep into Southern Israel.

Sadly, rocket fire is nothing new to the Israelis, who have seen 6000 rockets land in Southern Israel since unilaterally withdrawing from Gaza in 2005.

Hamas had a choice this past December—extend the cease-fire or continue hostilities. They chose war over peace.

Israel was forced by Hamas' action to make a choice too, either live with the threat of rocket fire against her people or take action to keep its people safe from harm. They made the choice any reasonable nation would make—to defend its citizens.

It is time for the Palestinians in Gaza to have better representation—representation that puts the peoples' well-being before Hamas' unachievable goals.

The U.S. Congress and the people of the United States will not allow a terrorist organization, like Hamas, to destroy the thriving democracy that is Israel.

We stand with Israel and her goal of peace.

Mr. PETERS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 34, the Gaza Conflict Resolution.

Israel has been under attack, and like any sovereign nation it has the right to defend itself. I steadfastly support Israel as it continues to undertake operations to ensure the security of its citizens. Israel is America's friend and ally and I support its pursuit of security and its objective of self defense in the face of continued attacks on its existence. Hamas is a terrorist organization and its actions undermine the hopes and aspirations of the Palestinian people.

The U.S. must do everything it can to help reach a resolution that begins with an immediate end to Hamas rocket fire on Israel and includes efforts to provide for the humanitarian needs of all civilians. The U.S. should continue to be thoroughly involved in the region in order to ensure Israel's security and help achieve sustained peace.

In support of these goals, I urge passage of this resolution.

Ms. MCCOLLUM. Madam Speaker, the resolution before the House today, H. Res. 34, sanctions the incursion of Israeli troops into Gaza to clear this occupied territory of Hamas

fighters regardless of the human cost, and calls for "supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process" while innocent Palestinian women and children are being killed in Gaza. This resolution strongly and justifiably condemns Hamas, but the resolution's intent and substance are void of any relation to the hellish reality that is being inflicted on the citizens of Gaza right now or the deprivation inflicted upon Gaza families by Israel's harsh denial of food, medicine and fuel over the past year.

This is only the latest battle in a long war for respect and security between Israel and the Palestinian people. Israeli citizens have suffered for years under an intermittent but terrifying rocket bombardments launched by militants in the Gaza Strip. Since 2001, 20 Israelis have been killed by these rockets, hundreds injured, and the lives of many thousands more disrupted by the constant fear of random and indiscriminate violence from the sky. When this summer's tenuous cease-fire broke down, the rocket attacks increased precipitously, prompting Israel's current military operation in Gaza.

I recognize Israel's right to protect its citizens from the persistent and growing threat of rocket attacks. However, as an unwavering proponent of peace, and as an advocate for the rights and security of the Israeli and Palestinian people, I seriously question the proportionality of Israel's response and regretfully predict that Israel's military action will produce only short-term security gains while severely undermining the prospects of peace in the months and years ahead.

Despite the fact too many Israeli citizens are under great stress from Hamas rockets, these weapons do not represent an existential threat to Israel. Rather than a serious military challenge, these rockets are like a drug gang that uses drive by shootings as a tactic to terrify a neighborhood. When is the solution to this type of terror for authorities to lay waste to the neighborhood?

Recent weeks of Israeli air and ground assaults have resulted in nearly 800 deaths, half of these innocent civilians. A population of 1.5 million Gazans, already weakened by previous months of economic blockade, are suffering from a lack of food, water, electricity and essential medicine. With border crossings closed, civilians are literally caught in the crossfire between Hamas militants and the Israeli army with no ability to escape. The difficult situation that existed in Gaza prior to Israel's attack has quickly deteriorated into a humanitarian disaster.

The world is watching as Israel's bombardment in Gaza continues to escalate. Public opinion around the world is hardening against Israel as desperate images of destruction reach the media. For example, a high-ranking Vatican official has compared the conditions in Gaza to "a big concentration camp." An Israeli official condemned the comments and chastised the Catholic leader's words as "far removed from truth and dignity." But after 13 days of warfare it is reported by officials in Gaza that more than 750 people are dead, of which 40 percent are women and children.

Last night, the United Nations Security Council voted and approved a resolution for "an immediate, durable and fully respected cease-fire" leading to a "full withdrawal" of Israeli forces from Gaza. The resolution also called for humanitarian aid to pass into Gaza and an end to trafficking of weapons into the