



Rep. Henry A. Waxman
H.R. 4681, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act
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Mr. Speaker. Hamas is first and foremost a terrorist organization. Ideologically, its charter is a clarion call for the destruction of Israel. In practice, the group has dedicated itself to murder and violence against innocent Israeli civilians. No election, no matter how democratic it is viewed by procedural standards, can wash its hands of the blood of its victims.

That is why H.R. 4681, the Palestinian Anti-Terrorism Act, is an essential piece of legislation. The bill would prohibit all direct aid to the Palestinian Authority as long as it is led by Hamas or any other group that refuses to renounce terrorism, recognize Israel's right to exist, and accept previous agreements.

There is no room for ambiguity. Last month, Hamas praised a terror attack in Tel Aviv as a legitimate act of self-defense. Just the other week, Jordanian authorities arrested 20 Hamas terrorists who were smuggling Iranian-made Katyusha rockets and tank missiles. Weapons are being smuggled across the Egyptian border as well. It cannot be tolerated.

For the most part, the Quartet has stood firm in isolating Hamas. The United States, the European Union, Canada and other nations have blocked the direct transfer of funds to the new Palestinian Authority and prohibited political contact with Hamas officials. The legislation before us codifies this approach.

H.R. 4681 also advances creative solutions to meet the humanitarian needs of the Palestinian people without empowering or enriching a terrorist regime. The legislation is carefully crafted to maintain assistance to the Palestinian people, while giving confidence to American taxpayers that aid will not be used to prop up Hamas leaders.

Direct U.S. assistance to the Palestinian people has always been primarily administered through non-governmental organizations via the USAID West Bank and Gaza aid program. H.R. 4681 makes this program, which accounts for the largest per capita U.S. aid contribution in the world, more central than ever. While some have expressed concern that requiring advanced notification and justification to Congress for non-humanitarian aid will delay or impede support for such programs, these concerns are misplaced. The modest conditions will only bring greater transparency and improve the quality and focus of the programs funded. Pre-certification is not necessary for the distribution of humanitarian aid.

In addition, the bill provides substantial flexibility to continue U.S. support for the independent Palestinian election commission and assistance to the office of President Mahmoud Abbas to support the peace process. Considering the hopes and expectations that the Hamas government will collapse, such support is imperative to build a viable political alternative that is moderate and free from the rampant corruption of Fatah candidates that alienated Palestinian voters.

United States foreign policy in the Middle East is full of nuance, but when it comes to Hamas our message must be black and white: we will not reward terrorists or terrorism.

H.R. 4681 conveys this timely and important message and it is worth our strong support.