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US Senate Endorses Israel's War on Gaza

By **Jeremy R. Hammond**

January 09, 2009 "Information Clearinghouse" -- - The US Senate on Thursday passed a non-binding resolution promoted by the influential Israeli lobby AIPAC (The American Israel Public Affairs Committee) effectively endorsing Israel's war on Gaza. The resolution, entitled "A resolution expressing solidarity with Israel in Israel's defense against terrorism in the Gaza Strip" recognizes "the right of Israel to defend itself against attacks from Gaza" and reaffirms "the United States' strong support for Israel in its battle with Hamas".

The resolution does not recognize the right to self-defense of the Palestinian people.

The resolution criticizes Hamas for refusing "to comply with the requirements of the Quartet", which include to "recognize Israel's right to exist" and to "renounce violence".

It makes no mention of Israel's continuing settlement expansion in the West Bank, also in violation of the Quartet requirements. Nor does it call upon Israel, which illegally occupies the West Bank and has held Gaza under siege for three years, to recognize the "right to exist" of a Palestinian state or to renounce violence.

The resolution condemns the use of "human shields" by Hamas, but says nothing of the indiscriminate killing by the Israeli Defense Force (IDF) that is taking a devastating toll upon civilians in Gaza.

The resolution, quoting from Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice, blames Hamas "for breaking the cease-fire and for the renewal of violence there".

It makes no mention of the fact that Hamas had strictly observed the cease-fire until it was violated by Israel on November 4, when Israel launched an airstrike into Gaza that killed 5 and injured several others.

The resolution notes that "the humanitarian situation in Gaza, including shortages of food, water, electricity and adequate medical care, is becoming more acute".

It neglects to point out that this is the direct result of Israel's policy of blockading Gaza, and that the humanitarian crisis has been greatly exacerbated by Israel's aerial bombardment and invasion of Gaza, instead praising the minimal amount of humanitarian aid Israel has allowed into the territory.

The resolution also states that "a sustainable resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict that will allow for a viable and independent Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with the State of Israel ..

will not be possible as long as Israeli civilians are under threat from within Gaza”.

It says nothing about the impossibility of such a two-state solution so long as Palestinians live under occupation and threat from Israel.

Members of Congress Voice Support for Israel

Rep. Jane Harman (D-CA) voiced her support for the resolution by saying that Israel’s war on Gaza was “phase in a war against Iranian terror”. She said she looked forward to being able to visit Israel when its citizens were no longer under threat, presumably from rockets fired from Gaza.

She said nothing about wanting to visit Gaza or looking forward to its citizens living no longer under threat from Israel.

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA) characterized Israel’s war as “self-defense” and said it was well within its rights to engage in such action. He said he supported a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict but added that such a solution would only be tenable if Israel is “secure”. He added that “Israel can always look to the United States for support and that this will continue to be true “when Barack Obama becomes President”.

He said nothing about the security of any future Palestinian state, or of the security of the territories at present that are illegally occupied by Israel. He offered no suggestions as to where the Palestinian people could look to for support.

Rep. Shelley Berkley (D-NV) expressed having “every confidence that the incoming administration would continue the unwavering support of the United States of America for the state of Israel. She said her own opinion, “as a Jewish member of Congress” is that Israel has “every right to defend itself” and that Israelis “have been too patient” in responding to rocket attacks from Gaza. She expressed that it was unacceptable for tunnels to be used to smuggle weapons into Gaza.

She failed to note that it was Israel, not Hamas, that first violated the cease-fire. She expressed no similar empathy for the Palestinian people, who have lived under oppression and terror on a much greater scale, a who have been killed in far higher numbers by Israeli military actions. She made no mention of the fact that the tunnels are also used to avert a complete humanitarian catastrophe, to bring in food, fuel, medical supplies and other humanitarian goods because Israel’s blockade has prevented such basic necessities from being delivered into Gaza.

Rep. Brad Sherman (D-CA) condemned Hamas’ firing of rockets into Israel because they were intended to kill civilians even though only a small number had been killed. He said the US looks forward to “supporting Israel through its difficult time now”.

He did not condemn the Israeli killing of hundreds of Palestinian civilians or express any empathy difficult time the Palestinians are going through.

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-NV) said “if you don’t want to be hit back, don’t hit. That’s really the message” of Israel’s war on Gaza. He blamed criticism of Israel on “anti-Semitism” and called it “blaming the victim”. He said “Israel has that right, to protect itself”.

He neglected to mention that it was Israel, not Hamas, which broke the cease-fire. Nor did he offer any indication that this standard applied equally to both Israelis and Palestinians. He expressed no support for the right of Palestinians to protect themselves.

Rep. Howard Berman (D-CA) expressed that weapons should not be made available to Hamas.

He offered no similar comments about weapons being made available to Israel.

Rep. Dennis Kucinich (D-OH) was a lone voice in the Congress expressing any kind of empathy for the plight of the Palestinians. In remarks from the floor of the House, he said:

“Wake up America. We have trillions for a war machine and the banks while our government stands by and sniffs at the slaughter of innocents in Gaza, where Israel is blocking aid for wounded Palestinians. Here’s today’s Washington Post. It says, ‘The International Committee of the Red Cross said Thursday that it found at least 15 bodies and several children emaciated but alive in a row of shattered houses in the Gaza Strip and accused the Israeli military of preventing ambulances from reaching the site for 4 days. 12 corpses lying on mattresses in one home, along with 4 young children lying next to their dead mothers.’ That’s a quote. Today, US tax dollars, US jets, and US helicopters provided to Israel are enabling the slaughter in Gaza. The administration enables Israel to press forward with the attack against defenseless civilians, blocks efforts at promoting a cease-fire at the UN, and refuses to make Israel compliant with conditions that arms shipment will not be used for aggression. Israel is going to receive \$30 billion in a ten year period for military assistance, without having to abide by any humanitarian principles, international laws, or standards of basic human decency. Wake up America.”

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