

**January 9, 2009**

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 cease-fire 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 cease-fire 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.