

## *Saying Aye to a Lie*

January 8, 2009

To Senators [fill in names]:

Today in the U.S. Senate you opened your mouths and said Aye to a lie.

In voting for the Senate Resolution to support Israel in its brutal assault on Gaza, a resolution sponsored by AIPAC, you and your colleagues subscribed in the name of the citizens of the United States to a tissue of mendacity and half-truths. In doing so, you have betrayed the trust vested in you by your constituents to act in their interest and to do so based on a deliberate consideration of the facts. You have acted with the same ideologically driven and fanatical disregard of truth and balance that impelled the outgoing Bush administration into its war in Iraq, with the dire consequences that were foreseeable and foreseen. You have submitted the international reputation, the security and the decency of this nation to the dictates of a special interest lobby group that acts in the interests of a foreign power.

The Resolution holds Hamas responsible for breaking the ceasefire. In fact, the cease-fire was broken by Israel, as it has been in 79% of all cases.<sup>1</sup> It was broken, according to Israeli and international sources, by the IDF's November 4 killing of 7 Palestinians for which the renewed rocket attacks were a retaliation. Israel is in this instance once again the aggressor.

The Resolution holds Hamas responsible for "using innocent civilians as human shields." As you well know, Gaza is the most heavily populated area of the Middle East, with one and a half million people crammed into a 129 square mile area that has been under a continuous and devastating siege by the State of Israel. The civilian casualties were a predictable and therefore calculated consequence of the air and ground bombardment. Israeli sources now admit that their killing of 45 Palestinian civilians, including women and children, seeking shelter in a UN School in Jabaliya Refugee Camp was not the result of militias hiding there; they have not produced any evidence that Hamas is anywhere deliberately using "human shields." On the contrary, it is Israel that has for decades inflicted collective punishment on the people of Occupied Palestine, in defiance of international law and civilized norms.

The Resolution endorses Prime Minister Olmert's claim that Israel "had no alternative to respond", thus representing the assault on Gaza as self-defense. As you well know, and as Israeli sources readily affirm, the assault has been long planned and has been timed to the electoral advantage of Ehud Barak and Tzipi Livni. It is a lie that Israel has no alternative. Israel could have renewed the cease-fire at any time by lifting its blockade on Gaza. The blockade is an act of war that has produced a humanitarian crisis and constitutes a collective punishment of the people of Gaza. The alternative is an even-handed and impartial recognition of the violence systematically inflicted upon the Palestinians by Israel, a power that the United States arms and supports and a call that it immediately cease and desist.

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<sup>1</sup> See Nancy Kanwisher, Johannes Haushofer, & Anat Biletzki, "Reigniting Violence: How Do Ceasefires End?", @

[http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nancy-kanwisher/reigniting-violence-how-d\\_b\\_155611.html](http://www.huffingtonpost.com/nancy-kanwisher/reigniting-violence-how-d_b_155611.html)

The Resolution claims that Israel has “facilitated humanitarian aid to Gaza with over 500 trucks and numerous ambulances entering the Gaza Strip since December 26, 2008.” This is an insult to our intelligence. As you well know, UNWRA estimates that they need at least 450 trucks of supplies per day to take care of the 85 percent of Gazans whom the blockade has reduced to dependence on food handouts. 500 trucks in two weeks is a meaningless PR gesture. Meanwhile, Human Rights observers, the Red Cross and the United Nations have called on the IDF to cease attacking and obstructing the access of ambulances and medical personnel to the hundreds of wounded civilians in the Strip. The United Nations has been obliged to suspend its operations because of attacks on its convoys and personnel by the IDF.

The Resolution accuses Hamas of holding the people of Gaza hostage. Hamas, whether we approve of their politics or not, are the elected leaders of the Palestinians in Gaza, elected in the fair and open democratic elections the U.S. has urged on the rest of the region. It is Israel that has held the Palestinians in both Gaza and the West Bank hostage, hostages subject to collective punishment and occupation, whose lands have been confiscated and given over to illegal settlement, whose children have been denied access to education, whose farmers have been cut off from their lands, whose crops have been destroyed and whose houses have been demolished.

The Resolution is a document corrupt and false in its entirety and you have shamed yourselves and exposed your unconscionable and longstanding bias in endorsing its propositions.

Israel, it is claimed, is the only democracy in the Middle East. You and your colleagues praise it as a flourishing, Western style democracy and as our ally and friend. Why then is Israel not held accountable to the norms of international law and conduct as all other nations are?

Israel has occupied Palestinian land for over 40 years. It has been condemned by UN Resolutions but has refused to withdraw to its 1967 borders, a step acknowledged to be a crucial concession if peace is to be negotiated. We did not accept Iraq’s right to occupy Kuwait, nor do we approve China’s occupation of Tibet. Why is Israel the exception?

As the occupying power, Israel is obliged to ensure the safety and security of the civilians of the occupied territory. Instead, it has consistently subjected them to collective punishment, to siege and to draconian controls over their freedom of movement. There is no other country over which we have such influence from which we would uncritically accept such conduct.

Israel is conducting a gradual war of ethnocide against the Palestinian people. Its treatment of the Palestinians in the occupied territories amounts, as President Carter affirms, to a state of apartheid. In Israel itself, there is one set of laws for Jews and another for non-Jews. We supported the South African people in their struggle against “a white state for a white people” and helped to end in Northern Ireland “a Protestant state for a Protestant people.” In doing so we brought about a peaceful resolution to long-standing conflicts. Yet you condemn the Palestinians for exercising their legitimate right to resist occupation and turn the victim into the victimizer. Why is Israel alone excepted from the norms of civilized conduct?

Without justice to Palestine, there will be no peace. This Senate Resolution is one-sided, untruthful, and in defiance of both fact and international law. In voting for it, you have once again sided against international opinion and against the better feeling of the citizens of this country who are coming to know that there is another story to be told, that of Israel's ruthless disregard for Palestinian life. In such expressions of partiality to Israel, even in its repeated criminal acts of war, you hinder any possible attempt by the United States to act as a broker for peace and consign yourselves to the opprobrium and contempt of the world.

Sincerely,