

Press Release

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SCHAKOWSKY STANDS IN SOLIDARITY WITH ISRAEL

Votes for resolution condemning attacks against Israel

WASHINGTON, DC -- U.S. Representative Jan Schakowsky today released the following statement following the passage of H.Res. 921, a resolution condemning the recent attacks against Israel, supporting Israel's right to defend itself, and holding terrorists and their state-sponsors accountable for their actions:

As a Jew, as someone who loves Israel, and as a member of Congress, I stand in solidarity with the people of Israel.

I remain committed to a peace process for Israel's security and for the future of the Middle East. Unfortunately, that peace process and the relative calm that has been the reality in the region in recent months were violently attacked at dawn on June 25th when a Hamas terror cell infiltrated Israel through a tunnel, murdered two Israeli soldiers, and kidnapped 19 year old Corporal Gilad Shalit. The operation was praised by the Hamas government. This came after Israel had fully withdrawn from Gaza in September 2005, a move that offered the Palestinian people the opportunity to begin the development of their future independent state.

Then on July 12th, the Iran and Syria-supported Hezbollah terrorist organization crossed the internationally recognized border between Lebanon and Israel under a barrage of rocket and missile salvos, initially killing two Israeli soldiers and kidnapping two more. From positions in Lebanon, Hezbollah launched dozens of rockets laden with ball bearings indiscriminately at civilian communities in Israel. Israel fully withdrew from Lebanon in May of the year 2000. Last week's attack was so egregious that it prompted the leaders of Arab states, such as Saudi Arabia, Egypt, and Jordan to condemn Hezbollah's act of vicious terrorism.

The premeditated, coordinated, and unprovoked terrorist attacks on Israel, from territory that Israel voluntarily conceded in an effort to promote peace and regional security, are absolutely

indefensible. Hamas and Hezbollah bear direct responsibility for this current conflict.

Hezbollah receives military, financial and political support from Iran and Syria, with Tehran providing the terrorist group with an estimated \$100 million annually. Regular weapons shipments including Katyusha rockets, new long-range ballistic missiles, Chinese-made anti-ship missiles, mortars, anti-tank missiles, mines, explosives and small arms are sent to Hezbollah from Tehran through Damascus.

Iran and Syria have provided Hezbollah with more than 10,000 rockets, including shorter-range Katyushas and more sophisticated longer-range weapons, which the terrorist group is now firing at major Israeli population centers across northern Israel and beyond. In fact, on July 14th, Hezbollah used a Silkworm cruise missile to attack an Israeli ship, killing four sailors and yesterday, rockets slammed into a Christian-Arab neighborhood of Nazareth, a city respected by people of all faiths around the world.

Both Syrian President Bashar Assad and Iranian President Mahmoud Ahmadinejad have met with Hezbollah Secretary General Hassan Nasrallah in the past year to reaffirm their ties to the terrorist group. Ahmadinejad promised to continue to support Hezbollah's struggle against the "enemies of Islam."

Israeli and American officials believe Hezbollah would not have attacked Israel without a green light from its patrons in Damascus and Tehran, and the leaders of both countries have subsequently expressed strong support for the attacks on Israel.

The United States Congress has already enacted several laws, including the Syria Accountability and Lebanese Sovereignty Restoration Act, and the Iran and Libya Sanctions Act, all of which call for the imposition of sanctions on Syria and Iran for, among other things, their support for terrorism and terrorist organizations. We must insist that President Bush bring the full force of political, diplomatic, and economic sanctions available to the Government of the United States against the Governments of Syria and Iran.

Sadly and frighteningly, Hezbollah remains off the European Union's (EU) terrorist list. This means that European nationals continue to provide Hezbollah with material support to this day. President Bush and Secretary of State Rice must make an immediate push with our European allies to have Hezbollah added to the EU terrorist list.

Israel has the responsibility to defend its citizens and cannot be expected to tolerate the violent provocations Hamas and Hezbollah committed this month. And while I am convinced that Israel is using every possible effort to avoid civilian casualties, it has become clear that the terrorists in Hamas and Hezbollah stage their actions from within civilian communities, thereby intentionally putting civilians at risk. Israel must do what is necessary to defend itself while continuing to make every effort to avoid civilian casualties.

As the New York Times stated: "Kidnapping Israeli soldiers to use as bargaining chips for the release of Arab prisoners is horrible behavior for groups that claim international recognition and political legitimacy, as Hamas and Hezbollah do. The same applies to lobbing rockets over

Israel's borders in the hope that they might kill unsuspecting civilians."

It is long past due for the international community to implement fully UN Security Council Resolution 1559, adopted in September 2004, which calls for the Lebanese army to secure southern Lebanon's border and for Hezbollah to be disarmed and disbanded. Lebanon cannot be free and democratic so long as Hezbollah continues to operate as a state within a state, complete with its own army.

Regarding the Palestinians, the peace process will continue to be under attack until Hamas denounces its violent charter, rejects terrorism, and recognizes Israel's right to exist and decides it is more important to build a Palestinian state than destroy the Jewish State. I encourage Israeli leaders to maintain a dialogue with moderates within the Palestinian Authority in order to keep hope of a two state solution in the near future alive.

But in the meantime, the United States must stand by its friend and ally Israel, and the Bush Administration must actively engage itself in seeking a resolution to this situation. As a first step to restoring calm, the kidnapped Israeli soldiers in Gaza and Lebanon must be returned unconditionally and unharmed, and the indiscriminate rocket attacks on Israeli civilians by Hamas and Hezbollah must end immediately.