

## Congresswoman advocates Middle East peace

April 29th, 2003

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University Wire

Democratic U.S. Rep. Jan Schakowsky has spent the past months criticizing the Bush administration's pre-emptive strike against Iraq -- but the third-term congresswoman used the military action to address the Israeli-Palestinian conflict also plaguing the region in a speech Monday night at Northwestern University.

Schakowsky represents Illinois' Ninth District, which includes Evanston, Skokie and Niles. She garnered more than 70 percent of the vote in her 2002 re-election and spoke to a crowd of 30 students affiliated with Students for Israel Monday. Like many other House Democrats, Schakowsky said she vehemently opposes the U.S. invasion of Iraq that took place six weeks ago -- and she blamed Bush for the potential consequences.

"I'm scared of this administration," she said. "Their vision of the world and the role the United States should play and the heavy hand in shaping the rest of the world really does frighten me. I hope that the bright light in all of this is that the United States plays a constructive role in helping to end violence between Israelis and Palestinians."

The congresswoman emphasized the delicate nature of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict while explaining her own background.

"I am a Jewish woman, a member of U.S. House of Representatives, a Zionist and a Democrat," Schakowsky said. "I support the peace and security of the state of Israel and a two-state solution where Palestinians will have a homeland of their own."

The current leadership transition occurring within the Palestinian Parliament could have a huge effect on any future peace negotiations. The Palestinian Parliament is set to vote Tuesday on the proposed cabinet of Palestinian Prime Minister-designate Mahmoud Abbas, popularly

known as Abu Mazen.

"The new prime minister leading the Palestinian people said he is committed to reaching a settlement," Schakowsky said. "The roadmap sets out requirements for both sides. Number one in my opinion is an end to violence and terrorism on the part of the Palestinians. It is important also for the Israelis to stop the expansion of settlements."

After addressing her opinion on the future of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, Schakowsky discussed her own political ambitions with The Daily. She downplayed speculation she might run for the U.S. Senate in 2004, even though current Sen. Peter Fitzgerald (R-Ill.) announced earlier this month that he would not seek re-election.

"I've ruled out running for the Senate," Schakowsky told The Daily. "I have an incredible district that allows me to be an outspoken representative."

Schakowsky also highlighted her plans to help place a Democrat back in the White House in 2004. When an audience member asked which Democratic candidate Schakowsky plans to support for president, she avoided giving a direct endorsement.

She emphasized the candidate who does receive her backing will have "real solutions" to the nation's economic problems and be able to "aggressively" define the differences between Democrats and Republicans.

Josh Kirschenbaum, an education sophomore and the political vice president of SFI, said he was impressed with Schakowsky's candor and comfort in speaking with the crowd.

"Our goal was to do something in a small setting," Kirschenbaum said. "So many times a message gets lost on a massive audience. We wanted something that would be more in-depth and meaningful."

Michal Berkson, an education sophomore, said she was impressed by the views expressed by Schakowsky.

"I agree with her politically, especially domestically," Berkson said. "I'm very glad she came to speak to us."