

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 27, 2008

The Honorable George W. Bush
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave. NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We commend you for your leadership in promoting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. The State of Israel has much to celebrate—and be proud of—in the sixty years since it was established. Yet tragically, in those six decades, Israel has yet to enjoy one day of real peace. We wish you the best of luck in your efforts, and genuinely hope they will lead to positive results.

We are, however, deeply concerned about recent negative developments in the area. The first is the situation in Gaza. As you know so well, Israelis living along the border with Gaza have been bombarded with unprovoked rocket fire virtually every day since Israel withdrew from Gaza in August, 2005. Palestinian terrorists have fired over 4,000 rockets and mortars from Gaza into southern Israel during that period, terrorizing the population of Sderot and other border towns. They have killed over a dozen innocent Israelis, and have injured or traumatized thousands more. Living a normal life in these towns has become impossible. Such deadly threats to Israeli civilians on a daily basis are unjustifiable and intolerable.

Compounding this problem, Hamas, which took over Gaza in an illegal coup last year and remains committed to Israel's destruction, has been rapidly improving the training and equipping of its forces. Aided by Iranian funding and support, Hamas has been reportedly smuggling longer-range and more destructive rockets, anti tank missiles, anti aircraft missiles and other sophisticated weapons into Gaza, while Hamas personnel reportedly have been actively training in Iranian camps. Such a rapid military buildup is a growing military threat to Israel and increasingly threatens Israeli civilians. At the same time, Hamas is expanding its inventory of longer range Katyusha rockets that are able to reach larger cities like Ashkelon, with a population of a quarter of a million. While you were in Israel celebrating its 60th anniversary, a Katyusha rocket from Gaza struck a mall in Ashkelon, wounding 90 civilians, including several children. Hamas has also acted against the interests of Gaza's population by attacking the civilian infrastructure used to provide humanitarian assistance such as food and fuel, and using innocent Palestinians as human shields by carrying out their rocket and other attacks from Palestinian civilian population centers.

While Israel and Hamas have agreed to a period of calm in Gaza, it is very fragile. Just six days after this period began, on June 24, Islamic Jihad terrorists fired a barrage of rockets into Israel; Hamas neither prevented nor condemned this action.

Israel has demonstrated enormous restraint in the face of this constant provocation. Few countries in the world would have tolerated such risks to their populations. Nevertheless, Israel, like any other nation, has the right – and the obligation - to defend her citizens from external threats. As Israel struggles to deal with the growing challenges from Gaza, it becomes all the more important for us to continue to support openly and publicly Israel’s right to self defense. We particularly urge you to continue to stand by Israel at the United Nations - where too many countries refuse to acknowledge Israel’s right to act in her own defense - and to veto any one-sided U.N. resolution.

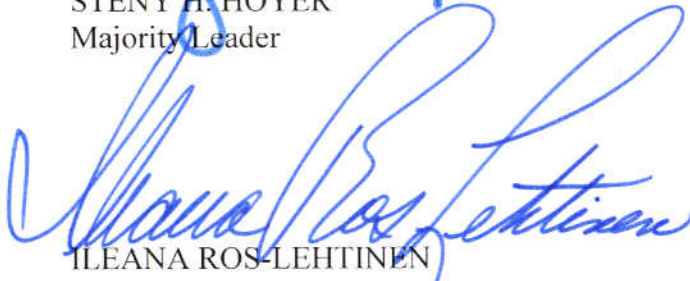
Finally, we must express our deepest disappointment at the inadequate response of most of the Arab world to the efforts of Israel and the Palestinians to reach a negotiated agreement. We had anticipated more from nations which claim that reaching such an agreement is one of their top priorities. We find it hard to comprehend why those Arab states that are flush with oil revenues cannot provide meaningful financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. Instead, they offered only meager pledges at last year’s donors’ conference, and most of those have yet to be met. Saudi Arabia, which thanks to oil revenues had a budget SURPLUS in 2007 of \$47.6 billion, has provided a paltry \$61.6 million to the Palestinian Authority. That is not a serious commitment to this process. Furthermore, most Arab states have done virtually nothing to advance a policy of recognition of Israel or reconciliation with Israel. They have also not provided the type of public political support Palestinian leaders will need in order to make the necessary compromises for peace. We must make it clear to our Arab friends that this process cannot succeed without their active financial, moral and political support, and that they bear a large responsibility for its success – or failure.

Mr. President, we know you face many challenges in the Middle East and elsewhere over the next few months. We urge you to continue your efforts to advance the Israel/Palestinian negotiations, to support Israel’s right to self defense against the growing threats from Gaza, and demand that the Arab states do far more to support those negotiations. We look forward to working with you to advance these critical objectives.

Sincerely,



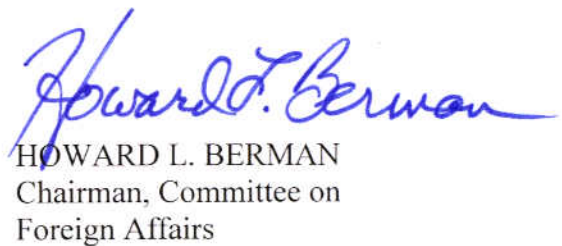
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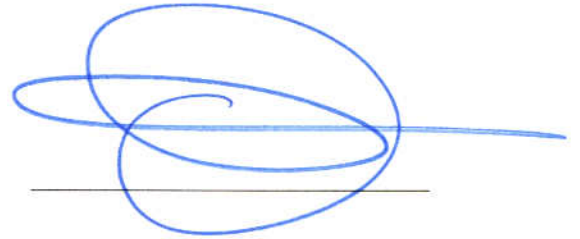
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