



Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-4302

June 29, 2010

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing to express our strong support for Israel's right to defend itself. We believe that it is in our national security interest to unequivocally reiterate that the United States stands behind our longtime friend and ally. Further, we urge you to remain steadfast in the defense of Israel in the face of the international community's rush to unfairly judge and condemn Israel in international fora such as the United Nations Security Council. We urge you to continue to use U.S. influence and, if necessary, veto power to prevent any biased or one-sided resolutions from passing.

On May 31, after repeated warnings, Israeli forces intercepted a flotilla attempting to break through its naval blockade of Gaza. The blockade of Gaza was instituted to stop terrorists from smuggling weapons into Gaza to murder innocent civilians. Since Israel's disengagement from Gaza in 2005, Hamas has fired more than 10,000 rockets and mortars at Israel's civilian population. Acknowledging the seriousness of the problem, Egypt also initiated its own blockade of Gaza along the Rafah crossing in 2007.

Over the course of its blockade, Israeli forces have diverted nine such flotillas, all without incident. The same was true for five of the six ships in this flotilla. They were commandeered peacefully and directed to the Israeli port of Ashdod. However, those aboard the largest ship, the Mavi Marmara, violently resisted. As dramatic video depicts, the passengers on the ship attacked Israeli soldiers with clubs, metal rods, and iron bars as they attempted to board the ship. The soldiers were brutally beaten and one was even thrown off the top deck. With their lives threatened, Israeli forces used necessary force as an act of self-defense and of last resort.

The several dozen who attacked the Israeli soldiers were not peaceful aid workers, but extremists who sought to aid the Iran-backed terrorist Hamas regime in Gaza. Days before, as broadcast on al-Jazeera, they proclaimed their willingness to be martyrs for the destruction of Israel, revealing a sinister element of premeditated violence. Furthermore, as confirmed by the State Department and intelligence agencies around the world, the Turkish aid group that sent out the flotilla, İnsani Yardım Vakfı (IHH), has met with senior officials of recognized terrorist groups over the last three years.

If the flotilla had been truly intent on bringing aid to Gaza, it could have done that. Israeli officials repeatedly offered their ports to harbor the ships and disperse the aid so that it would not

go into the hands of corrupt Hamas officials but directly to the people living in Gaza. But the flotilla refused these overtures, instead revealing their intent to break the blockade and sail unchecked into Gaza. As you know, Hamas even refused the aid that was aboard the Mavi Marmara after it was inspected by Israeli officials.

The U.S. should make every effort to thwart international condemnation and focus the international community on the crimes of the Iran-backed Hamas leadership against Israel and the Palestinian people. As Israel faces increased threats, most recently from the Iranian Revolutionary Guard Corps, which announced that it could provide a naval escort to any additional aid ships wishing to reach Gaza, the United States must continue to stand by Israel, one of our strongest allies.

We look forward to working with you on these vital issues affecting the U.S.-Israel relationship.

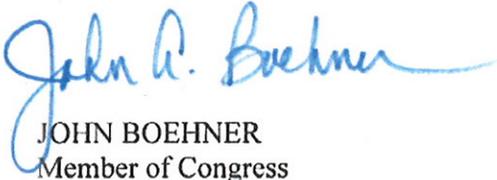
Sincerely,



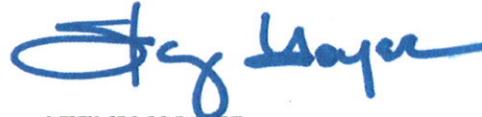
TED POE
Member of Congress



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Member of Congress



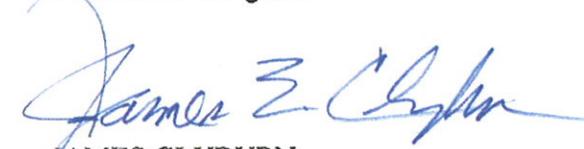
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Bill Pascrell Jr

BILL PASCRELL
Member of Congress

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EDWARD MARKEY
Member of Congress

Scott Murphy

SCOTT MURPHY
Member of Congress

Edolphus Towns

EDOLPHUS TOWNS
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney

JOE COURTNEY
Member of Congress

BILL PASCRELL, JR.
8TH DISTRICT, NEW JERSEY

2464 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
(202) 225-5751
(202) 225-5782 FAX

ROBERT A. ROE FEDERAL BUILDING
200 FEDERAL PLAZA, SUITE 500
PATERSON, NJ 07505
(973) 523-5152
(973) 523-0637 FAX

<http://pascrell.house.gov>
bill.pascrell@mail.house.gov



Congress of the United States
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AND OVERSIGHT

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

President Obama

Today you should have received a letter from me and a number of my colleagues expressing support for Israel's right to defend itself and its response to the Gaza flotilla incident last month. I wanted to take this opportunity to share some additional thoughts of mine on the matter.

The Israeli blockade of Gaza was designed to defend itself by preventing Hamas from resupplying with weapons and missiles that it has used to terrorize the citizens of Israel repeatedly in the past. Israel unquestionably has the right to defend itself and keep its citizens safe. The events surrounding the interception of the flotilla were indeed tragic, and I am pleased that the Israeli government has agreed to appoint an independent commission to investigate, as I called for last month. A clear, transparent, impartial and independent investigation by the Israelis is critical to understanding the circumstances of the tragedy. I urge you and all Americans not to rush to judgment until this investigation is complete.

Additionally, I am pleased Israel has announced changes to their blockade that will allow more humanitarian aid to reach the people of Gaza. I recently met with Ambassador Oren in Washington and we were in agreement that Israel's right to prevent Hamas from acquiring weapons and missiles is unquestioned. By taking this step, Israeli is able to keep its population safe while ensuring that the people of Gaza, many of whom are children, have access to the goods they need to meet their basic needs. For years, Hamas has been able to use the blockade to blame Israel for the conditions in Gaza instead of its own intractability, and this change in policy will hopefully loosen their hold over the territory. I appreciate the Administration's efforts to secure humanitarian aid for the people of Gaza and urge you to continue to work towards improving their living conditions.

Finally, I strongly urge you to continue your Administration's commitment to the peace process and, in particular, a two state solution. Ultimately, the only solution to the violence that plagues the region is a long lasting and permanent peace between the Israelis and Palestinians.

Sincerely,

Bill Pascrell

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress