



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-4302

June 17, 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 the national security interest of the United States to unequivocally reiterate that the United States stands behind its 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.

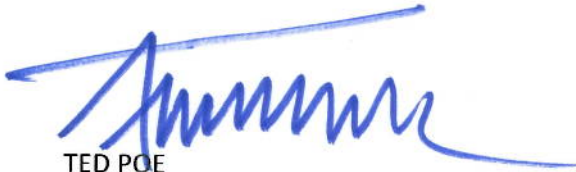
Over the course of its blockade, Israeli forces have diverted nine such flotillas, all without incident. The same was true for five of the six ships in this flotilla. They were commandeered peacefully and directed to the Israeli port of Ashdod. However, those aboard the largest ship, Mavi Marmara, violently 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 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 was 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.



TED POE
Member of Congress
TEXAS

Sincerely,



GARY PETERS
Member of Congress
MICHIGAN