



H.Res. 34 – Recognizing Israel’s right to defend itself against attacks from Gaza, reaffirming the United States’ strong support for Israel, and supporting the Israeli-Palestinian peace process

FLOOR SITUATION

H.Res. 34 is being considered on the floor under a motion to suspend the rules and will require a two-thirds majority vote for passage. This legislation was introduced by Representative Nancy Pelosi (D-CA) on January 8, 2009.

SUMMARY

H.Res. 34 resolves that the House of Representatives:

- Expresses support for and commitment to Israel and recognizes its right to self-defense.
- Reiterates that Hamas must end the rocket attacks against Israel and verifiably dismantle its terrorist infrastructure.
- Encourages the Administration to work to support a ceasefire in Gaza that prevents Hamas from retaining terrorist infrastructure.
- Expresses condolences to innocent Palestinian and Israeli victims and their families.
- Calls on all nations to condemn Hamas for embedding fighters and weapons among civilian populations and lays blame for the casualties in Gaza on Hamas.
- Calls on Egypt to intensify its efforts to halt smuggling between Egypt and Gaza.
- Calls for the immediate release of kidnapped Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.
- Reiterates support for a sustainable, two-state resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

BACKGROUND

On December 27, 2008, the Israeli Defense Forces launched an operation (Operation Cast Lead) in the Gaza Strip, in an effort to end rocket attacks from the Hamas terrorist organization, targeting civilian populations in the southern region of Israel. These attacks drastically intensified following the breakdown of a six-month ceasefire between Hamas and Israel, on December 19, 2008.

The Israeli operation in Gaza specifically aims to destroy Hamas weaponry and rocket launching pads and bases. During the conflict, Hamas rockets have struck as far as 25 miles into southern Israel, causing civilian casualties and infrastructure damage in towns such as Sderot and Ashdod, south of Tel Aviv. All schools have been closed in that part of the country. According to press reports, at least four Israelis have been killed by the Palestinian rocket attacks, but their way of life has been severely disrupted.

Israel and Hamas have been under international pressure to accept a diplomatic solution to the conflict, which has been pursued by France in recent days. On January 7, 2009, the BBC reported that Israel has agreed "on the principles" of a ceasefire proposal, but one has yet to take effect.

Hamas is classified as a Foreign Terrorist Organization by the State Department, and has been since 1997. The group was formed in 1987 as a Palestinian branch of the Muslim Brotherhood. Hamas uses terrorist methods to achieve its stated goal of establishing an Islamic Palestinian state in Israel. Hamas has previously engaged in large-scale suicide bombings in Israel. The group is primarily funded by Iran and donations from sympathizers in Arab states, according to the State Department. In past years, Hamas attacks have killed more than 500 civilians, including over 20 Americans. Gaza is "governed" by a de facto Hamas government, after it seized control of the Strip from the Palestinian Authority in a 2007 coup.

STAFF CONTACT

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