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Legislative Fact Sheet

Gaza Crisis

The Issue

- On June 19, 2008, an Egyptian negotiated cease-fire between the Palestinians and Israelis went into effect. The cease-fire was violated by both sides throughout its term. While any violation is problematic, only Israel's resulted in the loss of life.
 - "An Egyptian official involved with the negotiations said that there was little hope for the ceasefire. 'The truce has been active for 15 days, and for nearly half that time there have been violations by both sides.'"¹ (Times of London, 7/05/2008)
 - Israel conducted a bombing attack in the Gaza Strip on July 25.²
 - CNN's Rick Sanchez: "The date Israel broke the truce agreement was November 4th, when it killed five Palestinians fighters. On November 5th, another Israeli attack killed seven Palestinian fighters while on November 6th, yet again the Israeli army killed a Palestinian farmer. All of the Israeli killings were carried out in the Gaza Strip..."³ (CNN, 12/31/2008)
- "Why now? Two reasons: the expiration of the Israeli-Gazan cease-fire on December 19 and the Israeli national election coming up on February 10." (U.S News & World Report, 12/30/2008)

¹ http://www.timesonline.co.uk/tol/news/world/middle_east/article4272883.ece, accessed 12/30/2008

² http://news.sky.com/skynews/Home/World-News/Israeli-Airstrikes-On-Gaza-Key-events-in-2008/Article/200812415194562?ipos=World_News_Carousel_Region_3&lid=ARTICLE_15194562_Israeli_Airstrikes_On_Gaza%3A_Key_events_in_2008, accessed 1/02/2009

³ <http://transcripts.cnn.com/TRANSCRIPTS/0812/31/cnr.07.html>, accessed 1/02/2009

- The European Union (EU), Russia, the UN Secretary-General, the Arab League, the Organization of the Islamic Conference (OIC), and other international bodies are all urging Israel to end its attacks. Middle East envoy Tony Blair deplored the "tragic loss of life," while French President Nicolas Sarkozy condemned Israel's "disproportionate use of force." EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana said the Israeli attacks were "inflicting an unacceptable toll on Palestinian civilians and will only worsen the humanitarian crisis as well as complicate the search for a peaceful solution."
- According to the United Nations, in the four day period from the onset of Israeli bombing on 12/27 until 12/30 at least 62 noncombatant women and children were killed in Gaza and four Israeli civilians were killed. (LA Times, 12/30/2008) This disparity in civilian casualties is typical for the conflict. Unfortunately, all parties in the Middle East conflict have committed violence against civilians. We unequivocally condemn all of these actions. ⁴

What is Being Asked of Members of Congress?

Issue a public statement supporting peace and justice for all parties in the current humanitarian crisis unfolding in the Gaza Strip. In this statement, we request that you offer support for the Palestinian right to freedom from occupation, call for an end to the Israeli blockade of humanitarian supplies to Gaza and to demand a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The ceasefire should be restored and fully respected by both sides. Oppose any Congressional resolutions that favor either side in the conflict.

Reasons to Support

AMERICA BEING SEEN AS A FORCE IN BRINGING A DURABLE RESOLUTION TO THE MIDDLE EAST CONFLICT HURTS ANTI-AMERICAN EXTREMISTS.

- If our nation takes a leading role in guiding the Israelis and Palestinians to finalizing a just and lasting peace, this will deprive Al-Qaeda and other anti-American forces of a tool they use to bring people into their murderous mindset: the allegation that Americans do not care about Palestinian suffering.
- Israel is using U.S.-supplied weapons of war against civilian targets in violation of U.S. and international law. The U.S. Arms Export Control Act mandates that American weapons must be used for defensive purposes and not for human rights violations. No nation should be above the law.

⁴ http://www.latimes.com/news/nationworld/world/la-fg-gaza31-2008dec31_0,3840243.story, accessed 12/30/2008
1/02/2009

GAZANS MUST BE OFFERED A FUTURE THAT DOES NOT INVOLVE AN ENDLESS BLOCKADE WHILE WATCHING THEIR CHILDREN WITHER FROM IMPROPER MEDICAL CARE, NUTRITION AND POOR EDUCATION

- Israel controls access to and egress from the Gaza Strip, effectively giving it total control over the area. This control is comparable to a prison, where guards maintain control by monitoring the perimeter, not walking the yard.
 - “Gazans can’t turn on the lights, get tap water, buy enough food, or earn a living without Israel’s consent,” Joe Stork, acting director of Human Rights Watch’s Middle East division in January 2008.⁵
 - “The UN World Food Program reported shortages of meat, wheat flour and frozen food. Between January 14 and 20, the humanitarian and commercial foods entering Gaza totaled only 31 percent of basic food needs.”⁶
 - “Israel’s decision to limit fuel, and potentially electricity, to Gaza in retaliation for rocket attacks violates a basic principle of international humanitarian law, which prohibits a government with effective control over a territory from attacking or withholding objects that are essential to the survival of the civilian population, Human Rights Watch said. It also violates Israel’s duty as the occupying power to safeguard the health and welfare of the population under occupation.”⁷
- The United Nations reports “(t)he UN Children’s Fund (UNICEF) voiced deep concern over the impact of the current violence on youngsters and urged all parties to abide by their international legal obligation to ensure that children are protected and receive essential humanitarian supplies and support. Over half of the population in Gaza are children.”⁸
- Israel surrounded Gaza with a fence in 1994, more than a decade ago. Gazans have only seen their situation deteriorate over the last 14 years.

UNDER INTERNATIONAL LAW, ISRAEL IS AN OCCUPYING POWER. AMERICANS HAVE ALWAYS RESPECTED THE RIGHT OF AN OCCUPIED PEOPLE TO RESIST THE OCCUPATION,

⁵ <http://www.hrw.org/en/news/2008/01/25/israelgaza-israeli-blockade-unlawful-despite-gaza-border-breach>, accessed 12/31/2008

⁶ Same source as #4.

⁷ Same source as #4.

⁸ <http://www.un.org/apps/news/story.asp?NewsID=29436&Cr=&Cr1=>, accessed 12/30/2008
1/02/2009

WITHIN THE CONFINES OF LAWS AND UNIVERSAL ETHICS GOVERNING CONFLICTS, AND TO ESTABLISH A GOVERNMENT THAT TO THEM WILL “SEEM MOST LIKELY TO EFFECT THEIR SAFETY AND HAPPINESS.”⁹

- As recently as June 3, 2008, Secretary of State Rice spoke of ending “...the occupation that began in 1967...” when speaking to attendees of an American Israel Public Affairs Committee banquet.
- Israel has the fifth most powerful military in the world. Gazans have no air force, air defenses, navy or tanks.

OUR UNCRITICAL SUPPORT FOR A BELLIGERENT ISRAEL MAY ADD ADDITIONAL STRESS TO THE ECONOMY AS CONSUMERS IN THE MUSLIM WORLD AND BEYOND HOLD AMERICA RESPONSIBLE AND BEGIN TO DISTANCE THEMSELVES FROM OUR PRODUCTS.

IF THE UNITED STATES WISHES TO ACT AS AN HONEST BROKER OF PEACE, IT IS NECESSARY THAT WE RECOGNIZE THE FOLLOWING BASIC POINTS:

- Palestinians live under apartheid-like conditions.
- Collective punishment is always counterproductive.
- U.S. spokespersons should avoid rhetorical double standard that allows Palestinian civilians to be killed without protest. Additionally, the widespread perception that American officials parrot the Israeli line compromises our nation’s ability to act as fair negotiators.

⁹ The quote is from the Declaration of Independence.
1/02/2009