



ALERT

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Statements on the Palestinians Unilateral Statehood Bid at the United Nations

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Rep. Steve Austria (R-OH)

September 23, 2011

This unilateral attempt by the Palestinians is not in the best interest of the United States. It is not in the best interest of Israel – our closest ally in the Middle East. And, in my opinion, it is not in the best interest of the Palestinian people. Any decisions regarding Palestine’s statehood must come in conjunction with security for the Israeli people and multilateral talks with Israel.

Today, as the world watches the actions of the United Nations, I plant my feet firmly on the side of the Jewish State of Israel, and express my unwavering support for their country and security.

Israel stands as a beacon of hope in a region of the world where democracy and freedom are in short supply. With our continued friendship, we can ensure that Israel has the support and resources needed to continue on as a banner of freedom and democracy in the Middle East. *(Press Release)*

Rep. Shelly Berkley (D-NV)

September 22, 2011

I thank the gentleman from Florida very much for putting this Special Order together in order to discuss an issue that is very important and that is certainly front and center on the international scene today as it has been for the last several weeks. I also thank you, Mr. Deutch, for your extraordinarily steadfast support for the State of Israel and for the strong American-Israeli relationship that we work on and attempt to foster every day.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support our closest friend and ally, the State of Israel, and to support the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. We must oppose Abu Mazen's misguided and dangerous effort to bypass negotiations with Israel and go to the U.N. with a unilateral resolution in order to create a Palestinian state. The ramifications of that are extraordinary. They could destabilize the entire Middle East, put Israel on the defensive at the International Criminal Court, and create a failed terrorist state right next-door to the State of Israel--controlled by the Iranians, I might add.

The Palestinians have claimed that they're going to the U.N. because they have no partner to negotiate with, but it is the Palestinians, not the Israelis, who refuse to negotiate. They demand--and they demand it time and again--that Israel cease all settlement growth in the West Bank before they would be willing to sit down and negotiate for peace and a Palestinian state with the Israelis.

I think it's time that we talk and remember the exact history--and it's not such ancient history either. Even a full settlement freeze is not enough for Abu Mazen. In the summer of 2009--if we can remember back to that time--the Netanyahu government, at great political risk, agreed to freeze all settlement growth for 10 months. Did Abu Mazen and the Palestinians sit down at the negotiating table with the Israelis? There were 10 months

of a moratorium--certainly enough time to negotiate a peace agreement that would bring lasting peace to the Palestinian people and a Jewish State of Israel. Did he do that? No, he did not. He waited over 9 months to begin negotiating with Israel and only sat down at the table with weeks left on the Israeli moratorium. Then what did they do? The Palestinians demanded that the Israelis extend the moratorium. They did nothing for nine of the 10 months. Then they wanted to expand the moratorium.

This is not the behavior of a true negotiating partner. What type of negotiating partner invites Hamas, a terrorist organization, to join them and become part of the Palestinian Authority? Certainly not a peace partner that wishes to bring peace and a Palestinian state to the Middle East.

The Israelis, by contrast, have shown their commitment to negotiations and have repeatedly called on the Palestinians to join them at the negotiating table. When Prime Minister Bibi Netanyahu addressed the United States Congress in a joint session on May 24, he reiterated his willingness to make painful compromises in order to reach peace with the Palestinians, but the Palestinians have turned their backs on the negotiations or on any form of compromise and have gone to the notoriously anti-Israel body, the United Nations, where they believe they will receive more sympathy and, ultimately, success.

I appreciate the Obama administration's strong statements that they will veto any Palestinian statehood effort at the Security Council, but I am deeply concerned that the Palestinians will receive overwhelming approval at the General Assembly.

Today, the Palestinian Authority has tentatively agreed to merely introduce their resolution for a unilateral declaration of statehood in the Security Council and then ask that no action be taken until they negotiate with the Israelis. This concerns me greatly. What type of way is this to negotiate? Put a gun to Israel's head, and every time the Palestinians don't like the way the negotiations are going, the Palestinians can threaten that they're going back to the United Nations? I don't think this demonstrates a true interest in sitting down and negotiating for a Palestinian state.

Let me tell you, as I conclude, what I think we can do; and we should do it immediately.

Congress must act. We must send a clear signal to the Palestinians that we will not continue to support them with our foreign aid dollars if they choose to act unilaterally and avoid negotiations.

I will not continue to throw taxpayer money away at the Palestinians when they are refusing to negotiate in good faith for a Palestinian state.

I have introduced H.R. 1592, which would cut off funding to the Palestinian Authority if they unilaterally declare a state outside of negotiations. I hope my colleagues will join me in cosponsoring this timely legislation. We must send a clear message to the Palestinians that their efforts to circumvent negotiations are unacceptable and the only way to statehood, the only way, is at the negotiating table. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Gus Bilirakis (D-FL)

September 22, 2011

“We must stand by Israel during this tumultuous time in the Middle East and insist on a resolution that allows Israel to exist in peace as a Jewish state. Any two-state solution must be one that requires Hamas to renounce violence, accept Israel's right to exist, and accept prior agreements made by the Palestinians.

“The fate of a Palestinian state should not be in the hands of the United Nations or any other international entity. That fate alone belongs to the two parties. The Palestinian Authority must negotiate directly with the State of Israel in order to seek a mutually agreed upon resolution.” *(Press Release)*

Sen. Richard Blumenthal (D-CT)

September 22, 2011

I rise today to restate at this crucial juncture my unwavering commitment, as stated so eloquently by many in this body over the years, to the United States-Israel relationship and America's unshakeable commitment to Israel's security.

I thank the President of the United States for his address to the United Nations, which very powerfully and courageously stated that commitment. The President's strong message shows again that our shared interests, as well as our friendship with Israel, are deep and enduring.

As my colleagues know all too well, the Israelis and Palestinians must reach agreement through negotiations on the issues that divide them, not through the United Nations. Israel has repeatedly endorsed a two-state solution that will sustain it as a Jewish and democratic homeland. To be achievable, any lasting peace and any plan for peace must acknowledge the real security concerns that Israel faces day in and day out and has faced throughout its history.

The President's powerful remarks at the United Nations were inspiring in a forum that has been repeatedly hijacked by dictators and despots for the purpose of delegitimizing Israel and fomenting anti-Semitism. The Palestinian Authority's bid for United Nations recognition is a distraction from the hard work, the really hard work needed to achieve peace and find an equitable solution.

As the President said, “The fact is peace is hard.” To succeed, “peace depends upon compromise among people who must live together long after our speeches are over.”

Tough compromises will have to be made by both the Israelis and the Palestinians. The United States is ready to assist both peoples in taking necessary risks for peace, and Israel is willing to sit down and commence those talks immediately with the Palestinians.

The bid for United Nations recognition is also a distraction from the deteriorating situation in the Middle East, where governments of the region, both old and new, seem all too willing to use Israel as a target and as a scapegoat, rather than face the legitimate needs of their own people.

In Turkey, for example, the government has stretched to seek a confrontation with Israel rather than address the humanitarian disaster on its doorstep in Syria. In Egypt, the government honored those who attacked the Israeli Embassy in Cairo, rather than release from detention their citizens arrested for advocating for democratic reforms and freedom. Most concerning to this Chamber, Iran's Government has doggedly pursued nuclear weapons and threatens to destabilize the entire region. Nobody is fooled about the military dimensions of Iran's nuclear program.

On this day we do not yet know how the Palestinian Authority's bid for statehood recognition at the United Nations will be resolved. I do know my colleagues on both sides of the aisle will not be sidetracked from advocating for the hard work toward peace. By encouraging the Palestinian Authority to return to the negotiating table, which they have refused to do, and by continuing strong United States-Israel defense cooperation our Nation will deter those who would seek to achieve victory over Israel by either using the force of arms or manipulating international institutions such as the United Nations.

By sending the Iran, North Korea, and Syria Sanctions Consolidation Act of 2011 to the President for his signature, we can do our part to call attention to Iran's use of denial and deceit to advance its nuclear program. By passing a foreign operations appropriations bill for fiscal year 2012 that aligns our assistance with our international commitments--including over \$3 billion in aid to Israel--this body will, again, demonstrate its leadership in striving for peace.

Finally, I would be remiss if I did not call attention to the fact that while each of us was free to hear the President's remarks, yesterday was and today remains another day that Gilad Shalit is held hostage by Hamas. As a nation founded on the unalienable right to liberty, we must repudiate those who seek to forge a nation while continuing to collaborate with his captors. I urge his release.

I look forward to working with my colleagues and the President on all of these efforts. They are truly bipartisan. They unite us as a body and they unite the American people. I thank you. (*Congressional Record*)

Sen. Sherrod Brown (D-OH)

September 21, 2011

Earlier this week, I met with leaders in the Ohio Jewish community about events that could happen as the United Nations General Assembly convenes in the Presiding Officer's city, New York. One of the leaders and a dear friend of mine and a dear friend of Israel's told me these are tough times for Israel, some of the toughest ever. She took a

deep breath, gathered her thoughts, and said, "Until your neighbors accept you, it will always be a tough time."

Israel is accustomed to living in a tough neighborhood, but in recent months that has grown tougher. Confrontation with Israel is a new centerpiece of Turkish foreign policy. Leaders in Egypt question Egypt's commitment to its peace treaty with Israel. Hezbollah has consolidated its political hold on the Lebanese Government. Iran is probably consistently the largest threat to peace in the Middle East as they defiantly continue their unmistakable march to nuclear capability.

In the coming days, the next step in an escalation against Israel will take place should the Palestinians seek recognition as a state from the United Nations. Instead of negotiating directly with Israel, as the Palestinians have often committed to do as far back as the Oslo agreement, they are about to seek to exclude Israel from any role in deciding issues that are critical to achieving a permanent peace. That must not occur. This action could set back the peace process for decades to come. The Obama administration is assiduously attempting to stop this dangerous move.

Today, as it has done in the past, Congress must stand firm with Israel. It must oppose any Palestinian action at the U.N. which would circumvent its commitment to negotiate. Our support for Israel must be united. We must speak with one voice--Democrat and Republican, House and Senate, Congress and the administration. The administration has said it will veto a Security Council resolution that would recognize a Palestinian state, and it must do that.

The U.N. rules for admission require that any applicant before the U.N. be "peace loving" and "willing and able to carry out the obligations of the U.N. charter." The U.N. charter calls for "faith in fundamental human rights, in the dignity and worth of the human person." It calls on members to "practice tolerance and live together in peace with one another as good neighbors." The PA is not there yet.

U.N. membership and statehood itself is not a gift. It is not a right. It is earned. There is a responsible path for the Palestinians. Direct negotiations with Israel are the only way to produce a Palestinian state and the only way to achieve a lasting peace, just as direct negotiations produced peace between Israel and Egypt and Israel and Jordan.

Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu has called for direct talks to begin immediately, as have President Obama and so many of our colleagues. Why should the Palestinians be rewarded by the U.N. for refusing to negotiate with Israel?

If the Palestinians have elected to pursue confrontation over negotiation with Israel, we must rethink our efforts to support the Palestinians and the Palestinian Authority. Today, the Senate foreign operations subcommittee, of which I am a member, will be marking up the international affairs appropriations bill, which happens to be the same day the PA is considering making its plea at the United Nations. The bill is strong on holding the PA accountable should it attempt such a misguided maneuver. We cannot reward unilateral

acts. We cannot reward bad behavior borne of a clear rejection of the only proven path to peace.

Many of my colleagues and I understand that a great number of Palestinians want what we all want in this country--in New York and Ohio and across our country--and what people want in Israel: a better life for their children, a life of peace and prosperity between and among peoples.

I am confident the administration will veto any Security Council recognition of a Palestinian state, but there are other options and possibilities before the U.N., such as seeking recognition from the General Assembly as a nonmember state. While it is a different name and comes by different procedures, it doesn't solve the Palestinians' fundamental problems of avoiding the tough negotiations and the internal consensus-building that are essential for peacemaking to succeed. That is why U.S. leadership is so important at this critical time. That is why we must all speak with one voice and stand firm in an unbreakable bond with our ally Israel. Until we hold those who seek to destroy Israel accountable, it will always be a tough time for our closest ally. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Eric Cantor (R-VA)

September 22, 2011

Stand up against Palestinians' UN statehood bid: It's dangerous to Israel

Last Friday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced he would ignore international warnings and take his bid for recognition of a Palestinian state to the UN Security Council. The decision facing Abbas was a simple one: return to direct peace negotiations with Israel or rebuff the U.S. and renew diplomatic warfare against Israel. In choosing the latter, Abbas has put at risk not only the Palestinian Authority's relationship with the U.S., but the aspirations of his own people.

Having just returned from a visit to the Mideast, we are deeply concerned that the Palestinians' misguided pursuit of unilateral resolutions over negotiated agreements is moving the Arab-Israeli peace process in the wrong direction. A resolution to this conflict will be achieved only through direct negotiations: As Abbas prepares to forgo that understanding with a bid for statehood before the UN on Friday, he is violating not only prior agreements with Israeli governments but eroding the trust of all those on the ground who understand these agreements are the basis for future peace.

Israel has always demonstrated its desire to make sacrifices for the sake of peace. Just recently, Israel removed a significant number of checkpoints in the West Bank to facilitate Palestinian movement. It also instituted a 10-month settlement moratorium in an effort to jump-start negotiations with the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, Abbas did not take advantage of these opportunities. The Palestinian Authority cynically waited out the clock, choosing instead to wage an international public

relations war against Israel. It delayed talks with Israel to just a few weeks before the building moratorium's expiration, and then claimed that Israel's failure to extend that moratorium precluded negotiations. Its hope that the international community would then pressure Israel into more concessions is a desperate ploy.

Still, we remain hopeful. Palestinians living in the West Bank have experienced economic growth and improved living standards in recent years. Development in cities like Jenin and Ramallah has demonstrated to the Palestinians that there is hope for a better future. Security agreements between Israel and the PA have also improved the quality of life. Continued cooperation is a crucial part of ending terrorism and maintaining law and order in a future Palestinian state.

All of these positive changes have been a direct result of working toward peace with Israel. By disregarding these efforts, the PA is truly failing its people.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to pledge his willingness to make generous territorial concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for a full peace. He has endorsed a two-state solution and called for the immediate resumption of negotiations without preconditions. It is time for Abbas to forgo his public relations battle and return to the negotiating table.

His UN strategy is downright dangerous. Given the expectations gap among the Palestinian public, we fear it will lead to widespread violence, jeopardizing the West Bank's economic and security gains. This approach also violates the letter and spirit of the Oslo Accords, eroding the shrinking trust between both parties.

Congress will not sit idly by. The U.S. will likely reconsider its assistance program for the PA and other aspects of U.S.-Palestinian relations should the Palestinians choose to move forward in requesting a vote on statehood. We urge Abbas to eschew the route of diplomatic warfare at the UN and embrace negotiations with Israel immediately. Direct negotiations with Israel are the only way to achieve true and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis. (*Joint OpEd with Rep. Steny Hoyer in the [New York Daily News](#)*)

Sen. Benjamin Cardin (D-MD)

September 20, 2011

Mr. President, I take this time to bring to the attention of my colleagues activities that will take place this week in New York at the United Nations and the request that has been made by the Palestinians that they seek status as an independent state with full membership in the United Nations.

It is clearly the position of the United States, it is clearly I think the position of the international community, that there needs to be two states, a Jewish State of Israel along with an independent Palestinian State, living side by side in peace. But the only way that will take place is through direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. Prime Minister Netanyahu, the Prime Minister of Israel, was here in Washington and

spoke before a joint session of Congress. He laid out very clearly how peace in the Middle East needs to evolve, through the recognition by the international community of the Jewish State of Israel and an independent Palestinian State through direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Israel has been one of our strongest allies. They have been a loyal ally to the United States. We share common values. It is strategically critical to the United States, particularly in that part of the world. It is clear to all that the only way we will achieve the two states will be through direct negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis. The Palestinians have been reluctant to have these direct negotiations and tried to use intermediaries. They need to do it directly. Sit down with the Israelis. Negotiate the issues. That is the way to move forward to accomplish their goal.

The action they are seeking in the United Nations will be counterproductive. We have gone on record, every single one of us in the Senate of the United States, in S. Res. 185, a resolution I brought forward with my colleague from Maine, Senator Collins. It was passed unanimously by the Senate. It stated very clearly that if the Palestinians were to pursue this unilateral action through the United Nations, that would not advance the peace process, that it would be counterproductive to the objectives of the Palestinians to establish an independent state.

This past week, Senator Collins and I sent a letter to President Abbas, the President of the Palestinian group. We told him that we believed trying to go directly to the United Nations, circumventing the peace process, would be a lack of good faith in peace negotiations and that it would have repercussions on United States foreign policy.

What we have been told by the Palestinians is they will seek full membership as a state in the United Nations, going to the Security Council. That is not going to succeed. We hope the Security Council will recognize the inappropriateness of such action and will not take it up or will not provide the necessary support to forward it to the General Assembly. In the unlikely case that it were to get the necessary support in the Security Council, the United States has made it clear that it would veto any such action, for good reason-- because it would be counterproductive to achieving the objectives of two states living side by side in peace.

The Palestinians may go to the General Assembly. Although they cannot get full membership, they could try to advance a resolution within the General Assembly in the United Nations. We know the numbers. We know what could happen. But I must tell you, seeking some form of recognition through the General Assembly, circumventing the peace process and the Security Council, will be harmful to advancing the peace process and the objectives of the Palestinians for an independent state.

Let the parties negotiate directly, in good faith. Israel has indicated they are prepared to do that. We have been prepared to do that--negotiate in good faith through direct negotiations. There are no shortcuts to achieving this. Moving through the United Nations will not achieve those objectives. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Dennis Cardoza (D-CA)

September 21, 2011

Mr. Deutch, thank you for putting together this Special Order this evening. As you all know, the Palestinian Authority has stated that it will submit, or it's intending to submit, to the U.N. Secretary General Ban ki-Moon a resolution requesting recognition of Palestinian statehood.

As President Obama said today in his speech before the U.N. General Assembly, the bonds between the United States and Israel are unbreakable, as our commitment is to the security of Israel.

And as I and my colleagues in Congress expressed earlier this year, when there was an overwhelmingly passed House Resolution 268, the only path to a lasting peace is through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians that leads to a two-state solution.

Lasting peace will not come by playing destabilizing and damaging political games at the United Nations. A unilateral approach to Palestinian statehood will surely fail at the United Nations. It will fail, and in failing it will harm the bilateral negotiation process that is the only way to bring about a lasting peace.

A lasting peace cannot be achieved while a contingent within the Palestinian Government does not recognize Israel's right to exist. A lasting peace cannot be achieved while rockets are being fired into Israel, threatening her children and her people.

I was there with Mr. Deutch just days after an anti-tank rocket was shot into a yellow school bus. I ask every American watching tonight and those around the world to think what they would do if the State of Mexico fired on a school bus in El Paso and the response that we as a country would pursue.

A lasting peace cannot be achieved while the same group firing those rockets into Israel is actively trying to define Israel's borders so that those rockets would then strike major populated areas.

Finally, Mr. Speaker, a lasting peace cannot be achieved when one party fundamentally refuses to negotiate the terms of peace.

I call upon President Abbas to do what's right for both the Palestinian people, the Israeli people, and the world and to not put political gamesmanship ahead of a lasting peace. I call upon him to return to a negotiating table and to give up this spurious, dangerous, and damaging game. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Joseph Crowley (D-NY)

September 21, 2011

I want to thank my dear friend and colleague from Florida for yielding me this time.

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to speak about one of the most important issues in our world, and that is peace in the Middle East.

For far too many years, many parts of the United Nations have been hijacked by states opposed to the ongoing existence of the State of Israel. Some states simply refuse or are not willing to acknowledge that Israel is a country surrounded by many who seek her destruction. They seem to believe that if the Israelis simply conceded, simply gave up, that peace would come to the region.

That view doesn't only show a lack of understanding; it is simply wrong. The truth is no country in the world would ever take action that undermines its ability to defend itself and neither should the State of Israel.

Day in and day out, the people of Israel face the threat of terrorism. From the moment that they wake up in the morning to when they go to sleep at night, Israeli citizens wonder if they or their families will be the target of attacks.

Dozens of suicide bombings and attacks have been carried out over the past 10 years, and there is no doubt that each and every day Hamas is planning and preparing for even more attacks.

Madam Speaker, we need peace in the Middle East, but these are not the conditions for peace. How can anyone make peace when enemies are seeking their destruction? And now we see this move at the United Nations to secure unilateral declaration of statehood. Instead of finally achieving the peace that is so desperately needed, so desperately wanted, this looks like a step to try to back Israel into a corner.

Let me assure you, this is not the path to positive change. It is a grave error by Abu Mazen to demand recognition of statehood at this time. The fact is, the day after any vote, the situation on the ground in the Middle East will not have changed.

All the same issues will remain in place. The difference will be the trust. Trust will forever be eroded, and for good reason. That's not the only difference, however. There is another issue that I believe we need to have more discussion about.

I believe that what the Palestinian Authority is doing calls into question our funding for their work. The United States supported the Authority as a way to support peace efforts, but this statehood drive undermines those very efforts. American dollars are meant to support efforts by the Palestinian Authority to secure peace and to diminish violence, but this is not a blank check. We cannot support those who seek confrontation instead of reconciliation.

I believe it is time for a very, very serious review of our policy, the United States Congress and the United States' policy in its funding, not only for the Palestinian

Authority but for any nation that seeks to undermine the State of Israel within the U.N., not just the Palestinian Authority but any nation that would vote to undermine the existence of the State of Israel.

I want to thank Mr. Deutch and Mr. Hoyer and all of my colleagues for putting this effort together tonight. I and my colleagues will continue to stand firmly with the people of Israel. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Ted Deutch (D-FL)

September 15, 2011

Despite a year of historic Israeli concessions and repeated offers of direct negotiations, the Palestinians have now made clear they intend to unilaterally declare statehood at the United Nations Security Council. This is a reckless and counterproductive decision.

Unilateral action by the Palestinians is a direct challenge to the very legitimacy of Israel. While the United States will most certainly exercise its veto on the Security Council and defeat this resolution, the Palestinians should know that this type of misguided effort will be met with severe consequences from the United States, its single largest financial donor. Furthermore, the Palestinian plan to create a state based on the pre-1967 borders welcomes the terrorist group Hamas as a full partner in Gaza. The world must stand in opposition to this reckless and dangerous effort. (*Press Release*)

Rep. Bob Dold (R-IL)

September 22, 2011

Madam Speaker, what we are seeing at the United Nations this week is a brazen rejection of the basic principle of a negotiated peace. Tomorrow, Mahmoud Abbas will deliver a speech at the United Nations where he is expected to formally announce a resolution to unilaterally seek the declaration of a Palestinian state.

While we are ultimately committed to a future where the two states, Israel and Palestine, are able to live side by side in long-term peace and security, while all of us in this Chamber heard directly from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu in May on his nation's commitment to a two-state solution, the question I have and which I wish every nation in the world who will be voting on this issue should ask itself is: Are the Palestinians ready to make peace?

This is the key question and is what Prime Minister Netanyahu laid out in his remarks right here in this Chamber: "The conflict has never been about the establishment of a Palestinian state. It has always been about the existence of the Jewish state. That is what this conflict is about."

Madam Speaker, this unilateral declaration of independence is a direct challenge to the United States and the efforts and the dollars we have committed in recent years to

promote a real, lasting peace. It is fundamental that peace cannot be imposed from the outside. It can only be made in Jerusalem and Ramallah.

There are too many difficult core issues which can only adequately be addressed through direct negotiations, which must be mutually accepted by governments on both sides, and, most importantly, which must be ratified by the people who live there. Without these vital elements, you don't have peace. You don't even increase the chances for peace down the road. Rather, you undermine the prospects for achieving it in the future.

This is the point of this unilateral declaration. Where is the commitment to peace on the Palestinian side?

Palestinian officials have made it clear that this unilateral effort is another means of isolating Israel and escalating the conflict against her. Palestinian officials have made it clear that they seek to advance this bid so that they can attack Israel through the international legal system, including taking actions against Israel in the International Court of Justice.

The tragic reality, Madam Speaker, is that Israel lives in a very dangerous region of the world, and the Israeli people absolutely have grave security concerns that should not simply be tossed aside by countries that are allies of the United States of America. The Israeli people are surrounded by hostile neighbors that want to drive Israel out of existence. We here in America must understand the reality on the ground and the threats Israel faces each and every day.

Israel is a peace-seeking democracy, and the Israeli people simply want to live in peace and security. Iran has its proxies closing in: Hamas in Gaza; to the south there's the Muslim Brotherhood, now gaining significant power in Egypt; Hezbollah is in the north; and in the northeast is Syria, led by Assad.

The recent downgrade in relations by Turkey is very serious. The instability of the Sinai is of enormous concern. This is a dangerous neighborhood, and recent events are bringing into sharp view Israel's daily reality--increased isolation and living under siege.

As we witnessed with the flotilla last year, with the storming of Israel's Embassy in Cairo 2 weeks ago, or with Turkey's new aggressive, bellicose rhetoric and actions, Turkey, who until very recently had enjoyed a successful diplomatic and economic partnership with the State of Israel, events in the Middle East can easily spiral out of control and lead to outcomes that nobody desires.

Fortunately, the Members of this Chamber have made it clear to the entire world that we will not sit idly by during the continued delegitimization of the State of Israel and the international community. I applaud the efforts of my colleagues in both parties who have continued to beat the drum and call this unilateral attempt exactly what it is--an effort to circumvent direct negotiations and undermine peace.

I am pleased that the President is committed to vetoing this unilateral attempt in the Security Council if it does come to a vote, and I appreciate his administration's focus on this particular critical issue.

We must continue in our efforts to urge the nations of the world to stand with the United States, support peace efforts in the Middle East, and oppose this resolution.

Peace between Israel and her Palestinian neighbors cannot be achieved unless both sides sit and find common ground. Unilateral declarations and third parties cannot do it for them. The only path forward is for the Israelis and the Palestinians to sit together and find peace. It is time for Mr. Abbas to come back to the table--his actions and decisions here must not be rewarded; our allies in the world should recognize this--otherwise they are legitimizing and ratifying the Palestinian refusals to negotiate. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Elliot Engel (D-NY)

September 21, 2011

Madam Speaker, as we speak now, in my hometown of New York, United Nations leaders from all over the world are coming in. The major issue is the Palestinian claim they're going to go to the United Nations to have a declared state of their own.

I have news for the Palestinian leadership. The only way they can have a state of their own is to sit down face-to-face with Israel in face-to-face negotiations and hammer out an agreement, an agreement which is the two-state solution, an Israeli Jewish state and a Palestinian Arab state.

The Palestinians cannot try to impose any kind of solution that doesn't work. If two adversaries want to hash out a disagreement to come to an agreement, then they need face-to-face negotiation. This has happened in the past. Each time Israel has accepted it, and the Palestinians have said no.

The United Nations should not discredit itself even more and continue to be the usual kangaroo court against Israel. I'm glad that the United States and the President are standing up and saying that we will veto a resolution if it comes before the Security Council. (*Congressional Record*)

September 21, 2011

I thank the gentleman from Florida for yielding, and before I talk about these issues, let me first compliment the gentleman from Florida. He hasn't been in Congress very long, but he certainly made his mark very strongly, particularly on the U.S.-Israel relationship. He has been a stalwart supporter and a very articulate spokesperson for the U.S.-Israel relationship. I know that Mr. Deutch has been very, very effective, and it is an honor to do this Special Order with him this evening.

Madam Speaker, I agree with everything that every one of my colleagues said. Let me first say, because we are Democrats having this Special Order, there has been a lot of fighting in Congress, but one thing we don't fight about, Democrats and Republicans, we agree that the U.S.-Israel relationship must remain strong. If there is one thing that unites this Congress and unites Democrats and Republicans, it's strong support for the U.S.-Israel relationship.

Many of my colleagues have made very, very good points, many of which I want to reiterate, but I think the most important thing to reiterate is this: If there is a dispute anywhere around the world, the only way you can resolve that dispute is getting the two adversaries face to face in direct negotiations to hammer out all of the areas of disagreement and hopefully come to a peace agreement.

That happened in Ireland, in Northern Ireland, a place that we never thought would get peace but did, because both sides made the commitment that they preferred peace over war and over misery that had gone on for far too long. So they sat down face to face, with a little prodding from other countries, including the United States, and were able to hash out an agreement. That, I'm convinced, is the way that the Middle East difficulties will come to fruition, only by face-to-face negotiations.

The Palestinians, in my estimation, have attempted to throw so many preconditions at Israel before they will even sit down and negotiate that it has made it impossible for Israel to be able to sit down and talk with them. Boundaries like 1967 boundaries or settlements or expansion of neighborhoods, all these are final status issues. These are not issues where one side says to the other side, you have to unilaterally agree with our position before we will even sit down and negotiate with you. That makes no sense whatsoever. So face-to-face negotiations are the only way that we can have peace.

I would argue that going to the United Nations by the Palestinians actually sets back the cause of peace because if the United Nations were to declare a Palestinian state, say on the basis of the 1967 lines, which is what the Palestinians want, well, that is a guarantee that there can never be peace with an agreement like that. First of all, if the United Nations were to agree to that, no Palestinian leader in the future could ever accept anything less. And the Israelis can never accept, and will never accept, a return to the 1967 borders, which were indefensible. Israel fought wars because those 1967 borders were not defensible. And so these preconditions, and this going to the United Nations, actually sets back the cause of peace.

Now I just think a little bit of history is important because it's so easy to go on college campuses or to try to delegitimize Israel and the United Nations or to have statements that aren't really true. The fact of the matter is that Israel has always been prepared to make painful concessions for peace. I was in this Congress during 2000-2001 when President Clinton helped negotiate what we thought was a peace, the Oslo Accords, and what we thought was a peace between Israel and the Palestinians. I remember in 1993 on the White House lawn with Yasser Arafat and Yitzhak Rabin shaking hands. I remember

being there with my 8-month pregnant wife in 95-degree weather, and we all had such high hopes.

But what has happened? Abba Eban used to say the Palestinians never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity. And there have been many opportunities for peace. In 2000-2001, Israel agreed to a peace. Arafat, who was the Palestinian leader, said no. And what did Arafat turn down at that time? He turned down a Palestinian state, part of Jerusalem, 97 percent of the West Bank and billions and billions of dollars of aid. Israel said yes. He said no. I think it's important to put that in perspective.

Then the Palestinians talk about the right of return. They want to flood Israel with Palestinian refugees--not refugees that left in 1948, when Israel was founded--but their descendants. And that's a pipe dream because that could never happen. It would undermine the essence of a Jewish State of Israel.

So if there is going to be peace in the Middle East, we need to go back to what the partition of Palestine in 1948, the original resolution, said in the U.N. It said Palestine is to be partitioned into an Arab state and a Jewish state. And here we are, some 63 years later, and the Palestinians and most of the Arab world won't even recognize Israel as a Jewish state. That's where the problem lies, not with Israel. And the attempt to go to the United Nations and sort of do an end game around Israel will not work.

Finally, and then I'd be happy to discuss this further with my colleague from Florida (Mr. Deutch), let me just say this, and we have heard some rumblings about it with some of our colleagues here. This Congress will not continue to fund the Palestinian Authority. It's not going to be a blank check. If the Palestinian Authority doesn't want peace and doesn't show that it wants peace, we are not going to continue to fund them.

I introduced a resolution in the Foreign Affairs Committee which came before the State Department markup which passed unanimously on a roll call vote withholding money, ending money to the Palestinian Authority if they come to the United Nations for a vote. It passed unanimously--every Democrat, every Republican. And so this Congress is not going to be a fool. Either the Palestinians want peace or they don't. But they cannot have it both ways. They cannot say they want peace and refuse to sit down and talk to Israel face to face at a negotiating table.

So, Mr. Deutch, I want to thank you for doing this. I think it is very, very important that all people of good will, Democrats and Republicans, stand together in support of Israel. I think the President's speech today at the United Nations was a very good speech where he talked about the bond is unbreakable between the United States and Israel.

And we have to make sure that the Palestinians live up to their commitment. Israel is willing to live up to its commitments. Israel wants to live in peace. We're now waiting to see what the Palestinian and the Arab states want to do.

Finally, let me say this. There are two factions in the Palestinians: One is Fatah, which is Abbas' faction, and one is Hamas. Hamas controls Gaza. Hamas is a terrorist group. Hamas doesn't recognize Israel's right to exist. Hamas certainly doesn't recognize the right of a Jewish state to exist. How can we expect our ally Israel to sit, negotiate, and make peace with an entity that denies its very right to exist and an entity whose whole reason for being is to destroy the Jewish state?

We wouldn't ask that of ourselves. We shouldn't ask that of Israel.

Rep. Jeff Flake (R-AZ)

September 21, 2011

Madam Speaker, what happens at the United Nations this week will have a profound and lasting effect on the prospects for peace in the Middle East. If the Palestinian Authority succeeds in obtaining U.N. recognition for a Palestinian state, it will only delay genuine efforts at a negotiated settlement.

Israel has, for many years, cooperated in good faith with Palestinian and international efforts to mediate peace and work toward a two-state solution. It has made many concessions, some of which were not always in Israel's best interest. The Palestinians, unsatisfied with these efforts at the negotiating table, are seeking an end-run around Israel in an attempt to gain statehood by means of the United Nations.

Watching this spectacle unfold, I was reminded of the time I spent in Namibia in the late eighties and early nineties, where the U.N. General Assembly had arbitrarily designated one of the political parties the sole and authentic representative of the Namibian people. That had the effect of delaying the negotiating process that ultimately led to Namibia's independence. The same designation was awarded several decades ago to the PLO, and it had a similar effect.

The U.S. Government should use all the tools at its disposal, fiscal and otherwise, to ensure that that same outcome is avoided here. (*Congressional Record*)

Sen. Orin Hatch (R-UT)

September 22, 2011

Madam President, it appears the leader of the Palestinian Liberation Organization and the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, is going to request that the United Nations recognize Palestine as a member state. This action will create a major, unnecessary, and avoidable obstacle for peace. It is quite simply intolerable.

For that reason, yesterday I, along with 15 of my colleagues, including my colleague and friend from Kentucky, the Republican leader, introduced S. 1595, the Solidarity with Israel Act. Should the United Nations recognize a Palestinian state, this legislation would terminate the U.S. funding for the U.N.

I recognize that the consequences for recognizing a Palestinian state are severe, but they are appropriate.

Recognition of a Palestinian state at this point would undermine the peace process, and some have even questioned its legality. It would be a deeply irresponsible action that brings into further doubt the legitimacy of the United Nations as a good-faith actor in securing a more peaceful, more free, and more democratic world.

As I, and many of my colleagues have repeatedly stated on the floor of the Senate, the sole means to create a lasting and enduring peace between Israel and the Palestinians is through direct negotiations. By attempting an end run around these negotiations--and make no mistake, that is the aspiration of this Palestinian endeavor--the only result would be to delay the critical decisions which must be made to obtain a durable peace.

What is required is leadership--real leadership--to impress upon the Palestinians and the world community that if the United Nations capitulates and changes Palestine's status before a comprehensive peace agreement is reached, there will be consequences. Unfortunately, President Obama, in his speech to the United Nations yesterday, failed to provide that leadership and to take control of this quickly deteriorating situation.

Accordingly, yesterday, I and my colleagues introduced the Solidarity with Israel Act. The United States can and should exercise its Security Council veto if the Palestinians make good on their threat to attempt to change their U.N. status. However, the use of our veto power might not be enough to stop this subterfuge.

There are two methods by which the Palestinians could attempt to change their United Nations status. The first is to have the Security Council recommend to the General Assembly that Palestine become a member nation of the United Nations. But in the Security Council, the United States can veto a proposed change. However, the Palestinians also have another means to alter their status. They could petition the General Assembly directly--where the United States does not have a veto--and seek an upgrade from their current position as a permanent observer entity to a nonobserver state. If this occurs, the Palestinians will be in a much better position to manipulate U.N.-affiliated agencies, such as the International Criminal Court.

It should go without saying, but I will remind this body that the prospect of Palestinians bringing actions against Israel's leaders and military forces for defending our sovereign ally's right to exist is completely unacceptable.

We should expect more from the United Nations, but in spite of its sweeping statements in support of individual rights and peace, it has a mixed record at best when it comes to the treatment of Israel, a liberal democracy. The low point of its long and tarnished history on this subject was the General Assembly's contemptible 1975 resolution equating Zionism with racism. A General Assembly upgrade of the Palestinians to nonobserver statehood status would be another in a long line of hostile acts toward Israel and another hindrance to the peace prospect and process.

Deterring this outcome is the primary objective of the Solidarity with Israel Act. Israel is a friend and ally of the United States. It is a beacon of democracy and liberality in a part of the world that is too frequently lacking in both. Although the Palestinians have officially recognized Israel's right to exist, their rhetoric continues to bring the strength of this commitment into question.

Therefore, we cannot sit passively while the United Nations undermines Israel. Simply put, if the United Nations votes to harm our trusted ally by changing Palestine's U.N. status, this legislation would require termination of U.S. funding of the United Nations until a comprehensive peace agreement is reached with Israel.

The message of our legislation is also simple. The time for these types of games has ended. We will not stand by and allow a political spectacle to be created which only maligns our ally. The Solidarity with Israel Act seeks to deter those who would engage in false charades and redirect the international community toward promoting the only means to truly achieve a lasting peace: direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

It is my earnest hope that even greater numbers of Members will join us in this cause. I think this is an important issue, and I hope we can get every Member of this community, of this Senate, to join with us in this particular cause. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Steny Hoyer (D-MD)

September 22, 2011

Stand up against Palestinians' UN statehood bid: It's dangerous to Israel

Last Friday, Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas announced he would ignore international warnings and take his bid for recognition of a Palestinian state to the UN Security Council. The decision facing Abbas was a simple one: return to direct peace negotiations with Israel or rebuff the U.S. and renew diplomatic warfare against Israel. In choosing the latter, Abbas has put at risk not only the Palestinian Authority's relationship with the U.S., but the aspirations of his own people.

Having just returned from a visit to the Mideast, we are deeply concerned that the Palestinians' misguided pursuit of unilateral resolutions over negotiated agreements is moving the Arab-Israeli peace process in the wrong direction. A resolution to this conflict will be achieved only through direct negotiations: As Abbas prepares to forgo that understanding with a bid for statehood before the UN on Friday, he is violating not only prior agreements with Israeli governments but eroding the trust of all those on the ground who understand these agreements are the basis for future peace.

Israel has always demonstrated its desire to make sacrifices for the sake of peace. Just recently, Israel removed a significant number of checkpoints in the West Bank to facilitate Palestinian movement. It also instituted a 10-month settlement moratorium in an effort to jump-start negotiations with the Palestinians.

Unfortunately, Abbas did not take advantage of these opportunities. The Palestinian Authority cynically waited out the clock, choosing instead to wage an international public relations war against Israel. It delayed talks with Israel to just a few weeks before the building moratorium's expiration, and then claimed that Israel's failure to extend that moratorium precluded negotiations. Its hope that the international community would then pressure Israel into more concessions is a desperate ploy.

Still, we remain hopeful. Palestinians living in the West Bank have experienced economic growth and improved living standards in recent years. Development in cities like Jenin and Ramallah has demonstrated to the Palestinians that there is hope for a better future. Security agreements between Israel and the PA have also improved the quality of life. Continued cooperation is a crucial part of ending terrorism and maintaining law and order in a future Palestinian state.

All of these positive changes have been a direct result of working toward peace with Israel. By disregarding these efforts, the PA is truly failing its people.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has continued to pledge his willingness to make generous territorial concessions to the Palestinians in exchange for a full peace. He has endorsed a two-state solution and called for the immediate resumption of negotiations without preconditions. It is time for Abbas to forgo his public relations battle and return to the negotiating table.

His UN strategy is downright dangerous. Given the expectations gap among the Palestinian public, we fear it will lead to widespread violence, jeopardizing the West Bank's economic and security gains. This approach also violates the letter and spirit of the Oslo Accords, eroding the shrinking trust between both parties.

Congress will not sit idly by. The U.S. will likely reconsider its assistance program for the PA and other aspects of U.S.-Palestinian relations should the Palestinians choose to move forward in requesting a vote on statehood. We urge Abbas to eschew the route of diplomatic warfare at the UN and embrace negotiations with Israel immediately. Direct negotiations with Israel are the only way to achieve true and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis. (*Joint OpEd with Rep. Eric Cantor in the [New York Daily News](#)*)

Sen. Mike Johanns (R-NE)

September 22, 2011

Mr. President, I rise today to address the Palestinian efforts to gain statehood at the United Nations, which is occurring this week. As most of us are aware, Palestinian Authority President Abbas has signaled that he intends to ask the United Nations for acceptance as a full member state. Several of my colleagues--and I might add from both sides of the aisle--have expressed grave concern over this Palestinian initiative.

President Obama has indicated if this initiative is brought to a vote before the Security Council, the United States plans to veto it. I support that. However, even if the veto occurs, President Abbas may then choose to ask the General Assembly to upgrade Palestinian status to that of a nonvoting observer state. If allowed to become a nonvoting observer state, Palestinians could then participate on U.N. committees and bring allegations against Israel to the International Criminal Court and International Court of Justice. Recognizing a Palestinian state in this manner could also lead to further isolation of Israel within the Middle East. These are outcomes we simply cannot tolerate.

Israel, beyond any shadow of a doubt, is a stalwart friend and ally of the United States. They share our core values as a nation. They are a thriving democracy in a part of the world where democracies are very hard to find. And importantly, they stand strong with us in the battle against international terrorism. Thus, it is absolutely imperative we stand with Israel and do everything we can to send a very clear and straightforward message. That message is this: The United States stands with our friends and we will not allow an international organization to undermine this important and valued friend.

Congress has been very clear on this imperative. Our strong bipartisan commitment was reinforced earlier this summer when both the Senate and the House of Representatives overwhelmingly passed resolutions reaffirming the commitment of the United States to direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians. The resolutions included opposition to this Palestinian bid for U.N. statehood in a Palestinian Government that includes Hamas.

In light of this unwavering bipartisan support from Congress, it is crucial that our President continue to make it absolutely clear that the United States stands firm in our opposition to this effort. We have an opportunity and we must signal to the rest of the world that a lasting peace, which we all want to achieve, will only result from direct negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians and not through parliamentary procedure at some international organization. While the United States supports a two-state solution, we will not tolerate actions by international organizations to drive a wedge into the Israeli-Palestinian peace process. Although President Abbas claims his initiative is a peaceful approach to resolving the conflict, the Palestinian Authority has refused time and time again to come to the negotiating table and to deal directly with Israel. Setting up roadblock after roadblock, President Abbas has demanded preconditions that have not applied to previous negotiations.

This bid for U.N. statehood also violates the 1993 Oslo peace agreements signed by the Palestinian Authority which required the peace process to continue through direct negotiations. The U.N. statehood bid is counterproductive to a two-state solution as it will further damage Israel's confidence in the Palestinian Authority as a legitimate negotiating partner. Unfortunately, President Abbas's intention to form a unity government with Hamas does not signal support or pursuit of a lasting peace. Hamas has made clear that they have no intention of ending attacks on Palestinians or Israelis and working toward a two-state solution.

Let me be very clear: If the Palestinian Authority continues to associate with Hamas and refuses to negotiate directly with Israel, of course there are consequences. I can assure you the Senate and the House of Representatives will stand together to make our disapproval known. U.S. aid to the Palestinian Authority is not on cruise control. Congress will not walk away from supporting an appropriate way forward in the peace process that respects the equal and inalienable rights of all people. We will not and cannot stand idly by while others attempt to use the United Nations, not to bring about peace, but to undermine our closest allies and friends.

As President Obama and his administration continue efforts to resolve this issue before it is brought up to the Security Council, I ask them to do all they can to relay the disapproval of Congress and what President Abbas is trying to do and to stand without equivocation, shoulder to shoulder, with our friend, the state of Israel. It is our best chance of bringing peace to the region. (*Congressional Record*)

Sen. Mark Kirk (R-IL)

September 22, 2011

"Within the next 24 hours it appears Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas is determined to circumvent the peace process with Israel by jamming a U.N. resolution through the assembly.

"The President did the right thing by clearly stating the opposition of the US to this move. We must stand squarely behind Israel in the face of an effort from enemies to inflame passions in Egypt, Jordan and Turkey.

"At this key moment, I worked to win passage of the Graham appropriations amendment to consider closing the PLO/Hamas office in the United States. I am also working to generate pressure against the Turkish Prime Minister who is needlessly risking a confrontation between two U.S. allies. It has never been more important for the friends of Israel to show strong solidarity." (*Press Release*)

Rep. Nita Lowey (D-NY)

September 21, 2011

I want to thank my good friend Mr. Deutch. You are a principled, strong supporter of the Israel-United States alliance for organizing this conversation at this very, very critical time, and I thank you very much.

Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to the Palestinian Authority's counterproductive and dangerous gambit to declare statehood unilaterally through the United Nations.

As we all know, a genuine and lasting peace between the Israelis and Palestinians can only be achieved through a negotiated settlement between the parties, themselves. A lasting peace cannot be imposed on Israel and the Palestinians by an outside country, like the United States, or an organization, like the United Nations. That is why it is so

disturbing that the Palestinian Authority has chosen to discontinue direct negotiations with Israel and instead to pursue a unilateral declaration of statehood through the United Nations. This action will indisputably set back the prospects of a settlement between the parties and call into question the commitment of Palestinian leaders to genuine and lasting peace.

The Palestinian Authority receives more than \$500 million in economic and security assistance from the United States each year because it is in our interest and that of Israel's to support the ability of the P.A. to provide security and basic services, but that assistance is predicated on the willingness of the Palestinian Authority to negotiate directly with Israel toward its own state. President Abbas has been warned repeatedly, and I remain firm, that this counterproductive action by the P.A. crosses a line and should lead to a reevaluation of this assistance.

Despite the provocative decision of the Palestinian Authority to abandon negotiations and to pursue instead a unilateral declaration of statehood, I remain optimistic that the administration, working in concert with the Quartet, can facilitate the conditions for a resumption of good-faith negotiations.

I commend President Obama and Secretary Clinton for standing firm in support of a negotiated settlement and for reaffirming the unbreakable bond between Israel and the United States. I support the administration's tireless work to prevent a unilateral declaration of statehood from coming to a vote before the United Nations and to defeat this gambit if a vote does occur.

As President Obama stated today before the United Nations, peace is hard, but we also know that it is very much worth the effort. I encourage President Abbas to make the hard choice to return to negotiations with Israel. It is the only way to achieve the lasting and genuine peace that both Israelis and Palestinians seek. (*Congressional Record*)

Sen. Richard Lugar (R-IN)

September 22, 2011

The path to peace in the Middle East depends on negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. For decades, that principle has been a fundamental part of U.S. attempts to help resolve this conflict. The Palestinian attempt to unilaterally achieve statehood through maneuvers at the United Nations is ill-advised and counterproductive. The sooner Palestinian leaders rededicate themselves to the principle of a negotiated settlement, the sooner we can find solutions that can bring an enduring peace.

During this tumultuous time in the Middle East, it is important to reaffirm that America's commitment to Israel's safety and security remains unshakeable. As a democratic state and a market economy, Israel stands as an exemplar in a region that is awash with political and economic uncertainty. Our close friendship with Israel always will remain a central pillar of U.S. foreign policy.

Historic changes in the Middle East pose very difficult challenges for the United States. We should recognize that there are genuine opportunities in the long run for the advancement of democratic values and the broadening of prosperity. Yet these are accompanied by severe short term risks, particularly amidst crushing economic realities, such as youth unemployment rates of nearly 60 percent in Egypt and Syria. Americans have been moved by the power and speed of Tunisia's Jasmine Revolution and by the resolve of Egyptians, Libyans, Syrians, and others to alter the course of their history, in some cases in the face of brutal oppression. I support calls for greater political inclusion, the advancement of basic human rights and dignity, and more open economies throughout the region.

We should work to ensure that the historic Camp David Accords endure (consistent with assurances made to me personally by Egypt's interim leadership), that popularly-backed transitions underway will not be hijacked by extremist groups who would threaten U.S. and Israeli interests, that chemical weapons stocks in transition countries are secured and eliminated, and that Iranian influence in nations in transition is countered.

The United States has much at stake in the outcome. We must use the full scope of American influence to support a more peaceful, secure, and prosperous future for the entire region. This is important to our own fundamental national security, the global economy, and the security of Israel. (*Press Release*)

Rep. Dan Lungren (R-CA)

September 21, 2011

Several years ago, my wife and I, accompanied by a number of other Members and their spouses, were privileged to be in the State of Israel at the time the Israeli Government made a very difficult decision to turn over Gaza to the Palestinian Authority.

It was a very controversial decision. The question was: Would this gesture of goodwill be reciprocated by the other side? Unfortunately, of course, it was not. As in other gestures by the Israeli Government, the response has been: Give us more and we will not commit to the existence of Israel, but you have to commit to the existence of a Palestinian state.

Let there be no mistake. It is a bipartisan support on the floor of the House for the State of Israel at this time of great need for them when they face all sorts of problems in the United Nations and elsewhere.

Let us be clear. We will not be divided on this. Republicans, Democrats, conservatives, and liberals here in the House of Representatives and the United States Senate support Israel in their effort to remain free and to not be forced into positions that are totally unfair. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Don Manzullo (R-IL)

September 22, 2011

The Palestinians are playing a dangerous game at the United Nations (UN) by bypassing direct talks with Israel. The Palestinian attempt undercuts the peace process, challenges Israel's territorial integrity, and threatens the stability of the entire region. The United States has spent more than \$4 billion of taxpayers' hard earned money on foreign assistance to the Palestinians over the last 15 years. I call on Congress and the Administration to review all assistance to the Palestinian Authority immediately to determine when this funding should be stopped.

The Administration must stand with Congress to send a clear and unmistakable message that seeking statehood at the UN is not only counterproductive, but also endangers Israel's security. UN action cannot supplant talks that must take place between the Palestinians and Israel itself. A vote from the General Assembly will not create peace.
(Press Release)

Rep. Cathy McMorris Rodgers (R-WA)

September 22, 2011

Madam Speaker, it is with tremendous pride that I rise today to reaffirm my deep and unwavering commitment to the State of Israel, our greatest friend and closest ally in the Middle East.

This is a country that has celebrated our triumphs and mourned our tragedies, a country that has shared our principles of peace, freedom, and democracy, and, most of all, a country that has, without fail, defended America in her darkest hour.

As the U.N. considers recognizing an independent Palestinian state, it is more important now than ever that we stand up, speak out, and oppose this blatant attempt to circumvent direct talks with Israel. I've joined with many other colleagues in a letter to President Obama urging the U.N. to veto any resolution that grants the Palestinian statehood without direct negotiation with Israel.

Peace cannot be created or sustained through a single unilateral decision from the U.N. I will continue to urge the U.N. to veto, and I will stand with tremendous pride and admiration beside our friends in Israel. *(Congressional Record)*

Rep. David McKinley (R-WV)

September 21, 2011

Mr. Speaker, Israel is America's best and only reliable ally in the Middle East. Now the national security of Israel is being threatened by the Palestinians' rejection of the Oslo Peace Accords as they seek recognition directly from the United Nations.

America stands firmly with Israel and believes that peace in the Middle East can only be achieved through a negotiated solution.

I call on the Palestinian Authority to make peace with the democracy of Israel and the free world and to reject the terrorists of Hamas.

Prime Minister Netanyahu should be applauded for his efforts to restart direct, one-on-one negotiations with President Abbas without the influence of outside organizations.

Today, President Abbas should abandon Palestine's push for a vote on statehood and reengage with Israel to forge a lasting peace accord. (*Congressional Record*)

Sen. Jerry Moran (R-KS)

September 22, 2011

Madam President, this is a historically significant week for the United States and for all those who care about peace and stability in the Middle East. As we know, it is a region that is already roiled by protests and war and faces the prospect now of even more tension, more uncertainty, and potentially more violence.

We know this to be the case if the Palestinian Authority's President Abbas goes forward with his plan to seek recognition of Palestinian statehood at the United Nations in New York. We have known for some time that this was coming and, thankfully, the U.S. Government has expressed opposition to this ill-conceived idea, and the administration plans to direct a veto of the measure.

Our government has also worked to persuade other nations to join us in opposing the Palestinian statehood bid. But I am afraid we have not done enough to convince the Palestinians there will be consequences for their actions.

By pursuing recognition of a state at the U.N., President Abbas is choosing confrontation rather than negotiations with Israel. In doing so, he is violating the Oslo peace agreements signed 18 years ago which state that the conflict between Israel and the Palestinians must be solved through direct negotiations between the two parties. Direct negotiations are not just the best way to achieve peace, they are the only way to achieve lasting peace.

Direct negotiations are meant to bring the two sides to the finish line, where all the final status issues, including borders, can be resolved. By rejecting negotiations with Israel and appealing to the U.N., the Palestinians are trying to make the previous agreed-upon finish line the new start line. If President Abbas pursues statehood this week at the U.N., the Palestinians will find it more difficult to compromise in the future, given the terms of the state they are seeking recognition for.

Israel will also find it more difficult to enter into future talks when the starting point is already an unacceptable result. Years of American efforts to foster peace will be set back and threats to security will increase once the Palestinians discover that votes in favor of their statehood have not changed any of the circumstances of their daily lives.

The Palestinian statehood bid will do nothing to bring Palestinians or Israel peace, for peace cannot be made by votes in the Security Council or the General Assembly. All parties involved stand to lose if President Abbas pursues statehood at the United Nations.

It is important the truth be told. Israel is not what stands in the way of a Palestinian state; neither is the United States standing in the way of a Palestinian state, for both the United States and Israel have endorsed the creation of that future state. What prevents the state's creation is the Palestinian refusal to recognize Israel as a Jewish state with historical rights going back thousands of years, to the land and to Jerusalem.

The Palestinians must recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state and must return to the negotiating table. Rejecting these terms and instead going to the United Nations will result in widespread repercussions. The Palestinian Authority and the Palestinian people rely heavily upon international donors and support. Chief among those benefactors are the American taxpayer. Last year, Americans sent about \$550 million to the Palestinians.

In June, this Senate unanimously passed a resolution cosponsored by 90 Senators, including me. That resolution stated that the Senate intends to consider reductions and restrictions on aid to the Palestinian Authority should it continue its efforts to circumvent direct negotiations by turning to the United Nations.

My request this evening of my colleagues is that we should abide by this resolution. There might be consequences. Lasting peace requires it. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Ted Poe (R-TX)

September 15, 2011

Mr. Speaker, the Palestinians are going to the United Nations to seek some type of recognition as a state, but this decision should only be decided with direct negotiations with Israel and Palestine. The Palestinians have rejected this proper process for peace and go instead to the anti-Israel U.N. for recognition.

Dore Gold, a former Israeli ambassador to the U.N., said: "If there was a U.N. resolution whose first clause was anti-Israel and whose second clause was that the Earth was flat, the U.N. would pass it."

The U.S. has come to this issue late, and even though it will object to the Palestinian statehood through the U.N., in recent years, the United States has given mixed signals about its support for Israel. That is unfortunate. Israel is our most loyal friend and ally in the Middle East.

The U.S. objection to the Palestinian statehood in the U.N. will be a hollow, lone voice of reason. It will show once again that the U.S. has little leadership in the United Nations. However, the U.N. will reaffirm its position of bigotry against all things Israel even if it means proclaiming the Earth is flat.

This is yet another reason to cut U.S. aid to the U.N. We don't need to pay the U.N. to hate Israel. They will do it for free.

And that's just the way it is. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Michael Quigley (D-IL)

September 21, 2011

“It’s not too late. That’s my message to Palestinian Authority President Abbas, who has announced his intention to seek unilateral Palestinian statehood at the United Nations this Friday. It’s not too late to abandon this reckless route, engage in direct negotiations with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, and choose the path to peace.

“For there is only one road to a peace agreement, and that is through direct talks between the Israelis and Palestinians. This course forward is clearly outlined in the Oslo Peace Agreement, which states the Israeli-Palestinian conflict must be resolved through direct, two-party negotiations. Anything outside of these direct talks, particularly this Palestinian appeal for U.N. recognition, is a dangerous digression from the known way forward.

“In addition to veering from the track toward two states, a status upgrade at this time would allow the Palestinians to pursue cases against Israel in international institutions such as the International Criminal Court. Such institutions could even be used to request advisory rulings on final-status issues, further circumventing two-party negotiations.

“The U.S. has also made significant investments in bolstering Palestinian security and economic prosperity all in an effort to enable the Palestinians to make the difficult concessions necessary to move toward peace. This appeal to the U.N and rejection of direct, two-party talks directly undermines considerable American efforts and investments in a peace deal.

“Abbas and the Palestinians need to come back to the negotiating table, and it is the U.S. that needs to lead them back and spearhead negotiations. As a true and steadfast friend to Israel, there has never been a more vital time for America to stand strong with our ally.

“With the excitement and hope of the Arab Spring has also come a great deal of uncertainty. Uncertainty about the strength of the relationship between Israel and Turkey. Uncertainty about the willingness of the Egyptians to hold true to their promises under the benchmark 1979 peace treaty. Uncertainty about the security of the Sinai. Uncertainty surrounding the speed with which Iran marches toward a nuclear bomb. And uncertainty about the number of rockets being stockpiled by Hezbollah and Hamas aimed at the homes of Israeli citizens.

“But there is one thing that must be never uncertain: America’s support for Israel. A threat to Israel’s security or legitimacy is a threat to America, and we will not stand by and let Israel face these challenges alone. Upon her founding over six decades ago, the

United States was the first nation to recognize Israel. And since that recognition, the special bond between Israel and the U.S. has only grown stronger on the bed rock of the mutual principles of freedom, justice and peace. Now is the time to stand with our old friend and lead the way to peace.

“It is moments like these that test our mettle. It is moments like these that are recorded in our history books. And it is moments like these where we must show our leadership. America must do everything in its power to end this perilous Palestinian bid for unilateral statehood and get direct negotiations between the two parties back on track. And President Abbas must know that there will be consequences for choosing the path of confrontation over that of negotiation. The course to unilateral recognition is not free.

“The Israeli-Palestinian peace process is at a pivotal crossroad. The Palestinians can choose to pursue the dead end track toward U.N. recognition or they can adjust their course, end their wrongheaded U.N. bid, and sit down at the negotiating table with Israel. The choice is theirs.

It's not too late to choose the path toward peace. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Dave Reichert (D-WA)

September 22, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today in support of Israel. And in my belief that a nuclear-armed Iran poses a dire threat not only to Israel, but to the entire world.

Israel is a crucial ally and friend to the United States. There is a long, rich, and productive history between our two countries. Israel's safety, entrepreneurial spirit and diverse economy is an investment the United States stands behind. Additionally, if Israel's sovereignty and ability to compete on a level playing field is being threatened, it is important for all levels of the U.S. government to stand up and act. The partnership between our two democracies is strong and must remain so.

Palestinian leadership is attempting a unilateral effort toward statehood through the United Nations. However, Mideast peace cannot be achieved in such a manner. It can only be achieved through direct negotiations. An agreement suitable to both Israelis and Palestinians must achieve real security and mutual recognition of each state's right to exist. That cannot be achieved through unilateral action.

As unrest continues in the Middle East, the United States must remain steadfast in its unyielding support of our friend and ally. Sadly, Israel is in a volatile region of the world where our shared values of self-determination and democracy are under constant attack. That is why I continually support vital security assistance to Israel. And support legislation to impose sanctions on those aiding Iran's nuclear program. Iran's Mahmoud Ahmadinejad can never, at any time, be allowed to obtain nuclear weapons.

Israel's security, and regional stability in the Middle East, is a vital U.S. interest. As a member of Congress, I urge all branches of U.S. government to remain consistent in emphasizing their support for Israel. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Tom Rooney (R-FL)

September 21, 2011

Mr. Speaker, on Friday, Palestinian Authority President Abbas plans to seek recognition of a Palestinian state before the United Nations. A vote in the U.N. will bypass bilateral peace negotiations between Israel and the P.A. and will threaten the success of a mutual solution.

Leaders in the United States, Israel, and the P.A. have long worked toward a mutual solution, and the P.A., seeking unilateral recognition from the U.N. is not only harmful to these efforts, but also to the security of the State of Israel.

It's also important to note that the action coincides with a period of extreme volatility between Israel and their Middle Eastern neighbors. Israel's alliance with Turkey has continued to unravel over the past year, and its peace agreement with Egypt is in jeopardy.

The Palestinian Authority's move to circumvent direct talks with Israel will undermine Israel's right to exist. I call for President Abbas to withdraw his request for a U.N. vote and instead finally agree to sit down at the negotiating table with the U.S. and Israel to develop a mutual, legitimate solution. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Steve Rothman (D-NJ)

September 21, 2011

Madam Speaker, the Jewish State of Israel is essential to America's national security. The Jewish State of Israel guards the Mediterranean, the Suez Canal, and helps us with the oil and other activities in the Persian Gulf near Iran. Our relationship is mutually dependent, and so extremely important to both countries' vital national security.

But what's happening this week at the U.N., the Palestinians are going to the U.N. to avoid negotiating a peace agreement with Israel. The Palestinians want the U.N. to do what they won't do, negotiate a peace agreement.

Yet the Palestinians are made up of Hamas and Fatah. Hamas is a terrorist group with the blood of innocent Americans on their hands. Hamas' charter says they will never recognize Israel's right to exist.

Fatah is coming to the U.N. through their President Abbas, even though President Obama and the Congress have said, Go negotiate peace with Israel. Why would the Palestinians do that to the United States' vital national security interests and America's best friend in the region, the Jewish State of Israel? Because they are refusing to make an agreement to live in peace with the Jewish State.

The Congress has spoken. We will withdraw aid from the Palestinians, and the Palestinian people will suffer. The Palestinian leadership must withdraw from the U.N. and go to the negotiating table without pre-conditions with the Jewish State of Israel.
(*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Austin Scott (R-GA)

September 21, 2011

Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge President Obama to take a strong stance against the Palestinian Authority's efforts to seek unilateral recognition for statehood from the United Nations.

Mr. Speaker, Israel is our ally, an ally that has proven, time and again, a devotion to freedom, democracy, peace, and economic stability. Indeed, Mr. Speaker, Israel is our greatest ally in the turbulent Middle East, and we need to support their efforts to resolve their issues with the Palestinians. The President must show that America is resolute in support of Israel and that he is determined that we find real solutions for peace in the Middle East.

Mr. Speaker, solutions between Israel and the Palestinians will come through good-faith negotiations and cooperation. Solutions and peace come through both sides sitting at the table with equal determination to reach an agreement.

I hope that the President realizes all of this, and that he will show America's support for Israel and be a strong voice for peace reached through negotiations and partnership. The President should make clear to the Palestinian Authority that the way to a bright and stable future for the Palestinian people will be through talking to Israel, not unilaterally seeking statehood through the U.N.

I urge all of my colleagues in this House and the Members of the Senate to join me in this call. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Jan Schakowsky (D-IL)

September 21, 2011

I want to thank you so much, Mr. Deutch, for organizing tonight's Special Order.

Today, President Barack Obama clearly restated the U.S. commitment to negotiated peace and protection of human rights. In his remarks to the General Assembly of the United Nations, the President emphasized the importance not just of peace but of human dignity and economic opportunity.

In particular, President Obama again demonstrated that he is a true and steadfast friend of Israel and reiterated that "America's commitment to Israel's security is unshakeable, and our friendship with Israel is deep and enduring."

Like the President, I am a strong supporter of a two-state solution. I look forward to a future in which a Palestinian state exists in peace alongside the Jewish State of Israel. But as the President emphasized at the U.N. today, a genuine, true, and lasting peace can only be reached through negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves.

I strongly support the President's diplomatic leadership and efforts to convince the Palestinians and their international allies to abandon efforts to use the U.N. to bypass negotiations with Israel, and I join him in urging them to return to the talks with the Israelis. While we acknowledge that the conflict will not be resolved easily and that it will require difficult sacrifices from both parties, it is only through direct peace negotiations between the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves that a lasting solution can be found. There can be no substitute for such negotiations. As the President stated today in New York, "Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations."

In his speech today, the President recognized the legitimate desires of the Palestinian people for a state with recognized borders and opportunities for economic growth. I share his commitment to working toward that goal. But, as he also emphasized, any peace agreement must acknowledge and address the ongoing security threats faced daily by Israel and the Israeli people and be based on a recognition that Israel is the historic homeland of the Jewish people.

Instead of appealing to the U.N., the parties simply need to return to the table. A lasting peace cannot and will not be imposed by any external party. It must be reached by the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves, with regional and international support, including that of the United States of America. The Palestinians should abandon this effort at the United Nations. Our allies should stand with the State of Israel and a real peace negotiation. That means the Palestinians have to return to the bargaining table.

I thank you, Mr. Deutch. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Albio Sires (D-NJ)

September 21, 2011

Madam Speaker, Palestinian Authority President Abbas has announced that this Friday he will formally seek statehood recognition at the United Nations.

While there are obstacles to achieving a lasting and peaceful two-state solution, the PA's attempt to seek recognition at the UN demonstrates that they are not truly interested in achieving peace.

Such a unilateral approach, will not lead to peace. This action violates the letter and spirit of the Oslo accords and deals a significant blow to future negotiations.

Recognizing a Palestinian state would also give legitimacy to Hamas given that the terrorist group currently is in control of the Gaza Strip--an area the PA claims for its state.

By granting recognition of a state, the international community will reward Hamas for its terrorist actions, rather than condemn them.

Furthermore, this reckless action at the UN could lead to widespread violence on the ground.

The only way to achieve a two-state solution is through direct negotiations leading to a peace treaty fully accepted by both governments and by both peoples.

A vote on a unilateral UN resolution will likely set prospects for peace in the region back years.

The United States needs to stand strong with Israel, and I am pleased that President Obama has called the Palestinian efforts at the UN a ``mistake" and has stated that the United States will veto this resolution should it be brought before the Security Council.

We need a unified voice from the United States and our allies showing that this action is not the way to achieve a peace and that if such action is taken, there will be consequences. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Nikki Tsongas (D-MA)

September 21, 2011

In his address to the United Nations this morning, President Obama correctly stated that there are no shortcuts to peace and that attempts by the Palestinian Authority to unilaterally seek statehood recognition through the United Nations would significantly damage the already fragile peace process. A lasting peace that produces a two state solution must be achieved through direct negotiations between the two parties – not through a vote by unaffected and unaffiliated countries from around the world.

No one is under any illusion that the path to peace will be an easy one, but it is a path that the parties must walk together in order to bring an end to this tragic conflict. The U.S. must support initiatives that will create a stable and lasting peace for both Israel and the Palestinians and oppose those, like the UN resolution being offered, that would impede this effort. (*Press Release*)

Sen. David Vitter (R-LA)

September 22, 2011

This is merely an attempt by the Palestinian Authority, supported by Hamas and other terrorist groups, to circumvent the established peace process supported by the United States.

The Palestinian leadership has repeatedly rejected Israel's peace offers, and this bad-faith effort at the U.N. would only cast more doubt on the Palestinians' commitment to peace. The Palestinian Authority also continues to allow Hamas to launch terrorist attacks against Israel from within what would be its borders if it were made a state.

While I was relieved that President Obama, in his remarks at the U.N., made it clear that the United States opposes the Palestinians' demands for immediate statehood, I believe the president should have been firmer in asserting that the United States stands shoulder to shoulder with Israel. (*Press Release*)

Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz (D-FL)

September 21, 2011

Thank you very much for putting together this important Special Order hour to give us an opportunity to come together in support of our ally and friend, the State of Israel.

I rise today in praise of President Obama's enduring, unequivocal support for our ally Israel and a vision for a peaceful world.

This morning at the United Nations, President Obama shared with an international audience his commitment to Israel's security in the midst of a challenging region and complex times. The administration approached this year's U.N. General Assembly standing strong with our ally in many respects. From once again boycotting the anti-Semitic activities surrounding the Durban Conference, to pledging to veto any Palestinian unilateral declaration of independence in the Security Council, to working all summer with our partners and allies against the unending efforts to criticize and delegitimize Israel at the U.N., President Obama has been a stalwart ally of Israel in this international forum. I'm so pleased that he continued in that vein this morning with his address to the General Assembly.

In his historic speech to this global audience, President Obama once again demonstrated his stalwart support for our friend and ally Israel. Importantly, President Obama used this opportunity at the United Nations to unambiguously state his support for direct, bilateral negotiations as the only way to solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and create a Palestinian state.

As the President said, "a genuine peace can only be realized between the Israelis and the Palestinians themselves. There is no shortcut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations. It is the Israelis and the Palestinians, not us, who must reach agreement on the issues that divide them: on borders and on security, on refugees and Jerusalem."

President Obama made it resoundingly clear that unilateral action will never create a state and that we must continue to support a process between two peoples that recognize both security concerns and national aspirations. And that clarity has not gone unnoticed.

Prime Minister Netanyahu, speaking after the President's speech today, said that our President is wearing a "badge of honor" for his commitment to direct, bilateral negotiations as the only way to a Palestinian state.

As he has done so many times in the past, President Obama again put forth our country's unshakable commitment to Israel's safety and security as a central tenet to peace. The President reaffirmed our enduring friendship to our ally Israel noting the very real security concerns of being surrounded by hostile neighbors. He made clear to the world that he understands the very real threat Israelis face in constant rockets and suicide bombs and children coming of age knowing that, throughout the region, other children are taught to hate them. Only when Israel feels its security concerns are met will future generations of Israelis and Palestinians live side by side in pride and in peace.

With the international community assembled, President Obama stressed the difficult but vital efforts we must all make in our quest for peace, not only for Israelis and Palestinians, but also across the Middle East and all around the world.

He spoke of the accomplishments of revolutions that have brought burgeoning democracies to the Middle East and North Africa over the past year and the frustrated aspirations of many in the region where democracy is yet to come.

In praising the new free Libya and urging the international communities to join us in sanctioning Iran and Syria, the President affirmed his commitment to supporting those who wish to cast off tyranny. And in a world free from the terror of Osama bin Laden, President Obama emphasized our continued quest to end the religious, gender, and sexual persecution that prevents all people from achieving their true potential.

I am so proud of President Obama's unwavering support for Israel and his overall vision for peace that he laid out at the United Nations this morning.

Hopefully, hearing the strong message from the United States, the Palestinians will once again return to the negotiating table with Israel and work out a just and lasting solution between the two parties. In the meantime, we can stand tall with the exemplary efforts by this pro-Israel President as we continue to engage diplomatically over the coming weeks to ensure that bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians will resume.

Thank you, Mr. Deutch, for your unwavering support for our ally. (*Congressional Record*)

Rep. Henry Waxman (D-CA)

September 21, 2011

Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to join with so many Members of the House to express our profound concern, and strenuous opposition, to the impending request by the

President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, to seek a unilateral declaration of statehood at the United Nations later this week.

The Palestinian leadership says it wants peace with Israel, but their actions and words contradict their assertions. It is not at all clear President Abbas is even capable of making peace with Israel. He refused to enter direct negotiations last year even when Israel agreed to a settlement freeze. He refuses to accept a simple statement that he accepts Israel as a Jewish state. And, as a prelude to his bid for statehood from the United Nations, he wrote in the New York Times last May: "Palestine's admission to the United Nations would pave the way for the internationalization of the conflict as a legal matter, not only a political one." Recognition of statehood by the United Nations, in other words, is simply another front in the conflict--and not a settlement of the conflict.

Any move towards statehood for Palestine in the United Nations is gravely flawed.

First, a unilateral declaration of statehood, by the Palestinians themselves or through the United Nations, constitutes a unilateral repudiation of the peace process. A Palestinian state can only emerge at the conclusion of a peace treaty with Israel. As President Obama told the assembled leaders of the world today at the United Nations: "There is no short cut to the end of a conflict that has endured for decades. Peace is hard work. Peace will not come through statements and resolutions at the United Nations."

Second, a unilateral declaration by the Palestinians will not bring a State of Palestine into existence. Without agreed borders, there is no agreed state. Without an agreed state, there is no lawfully constituted government of the state of Palestine.

Third, such action at the United Nations may well provoke violence in the West Bank and Gaza and possibly across the region. Excessive expectations among the Palestinians have been induced by the public campaign of the Palestinian Authority to seek statehood through the U.N. Reality cannot and will not meet those expectations--leading to immense frustration for Palestinians in the West Bank and elsewhere. In the past, this has led to successive uprisings targeting Israel. Such violence has been vicious and inhumane, with immense loss of life--and it serves no purpose. It brings neither peace nor statehood any closer. But the threat of violence overhangs the Palestinian maneuvers at the U.N.

Fourth, unilateral action at the United Nations will be a major setback of incalculable duration to any meaningful resolution of the issues if there is to be a just and lasting peace with Israel, and the establishment of a Palestinian state. If the Palestinians seek to act on their own, what is there to negotiate with Israel? Where is the dialogue? What can possibly be the prospects for a meeting of the minds and a resolution of the issues of borders, security, Jerusalem, and refugees? A unilateral declaration of statehood is not a substitute for the peace process; it is a repudiation of the peace process. And that means the end to the peace process.

Fifth, a recognition of Palestine by the United Nations will lead to great legal vulnerability to Israel and its government's leaders by giving Palestine standing in several international institutions, such as the International Court of Justice. No settlement of any issues or grievances between the parties can be advanced by legal harassment of Israel in international organizations.

For all these reasons, I believe it is imperative that the United Nations reject any unilateral bid for statehood for Palestine.

The member states of the United Nations must understand that a vote against a resolution in the General Assembly is not a vote against a Palestinian State--it is a vote to get the parties into direct negotiations so that a Palestinian State can truly and successfully and legitimately arise.

As President Obama said today: ``We will only succeed in that effort if we can encourage the parties to sit down together, to listen to each other, and to understand each other's hopes and fears. That is the project to which America is committed, and that is what the United Nations should be focused on in the weeks and months to come."'

Last week, I was pleased to join with dozens of Members of the House in correspondence directed to several dozen foreign heads of state, in which we urged that their governments reject a unilateral declaration of statehood for Palestine by the United Nations.

I commend our correspondence to all our colleagues. We will continue our efforts at the United Nations and redouble our commitment to the re-commencement of direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians leading to a peace agreement between them.

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
September 15, 2011.

We write on a matter of great urgency, on the eve of the United Nations General Assembly meeting. It is our understanding that the leadership of the Palestinian Authority will pursue a resolution at the United Nations--in either or both the Security Council and the General Assembly--to grant the Palestinians the equivalent of statehood and/or prejudge final issues, including borders and the status of Jerusalem. One of the major goals of this effort is for the Palestinians to better position themselves to petition the International Criminal Court, very possibly bogging down the court for the foreseeable future.

It is our strong belief that such unilateral action would have devastating consequences for the peace process and the Palestinians themselves. Accordingly, we urge you in the strongest terms not to support this effort.

We believe that the only way to achieve a two-state solution is through direct negotiations leading to a peace treaty fully accepted by both governments and by both

peoples. A just and lasting peace cannot and must not be imposed on the parties. If the Palestinians pursue such a unilateral approach, it violates the letter and spirit of the Oslo Accords and will deal a significant blow to future negotiations. Given the expectations gap among the Palestinian public, such action could lead to widespread violence on the ground, jeopardizing the West Bank's impressive economic and security gains over recent years. There is also a substantial risk of more broadly inflaming the region and increasing violence at a time of already great instability. Finally, the United States will reconsider its assistance program for the Palestinian Authority and other aspects of U.S.-Palestinian relations if they choose to pursue such a unilateral effort.

We are confident that your government shares the United States' commitment to a comprehensive resolution of the conflict between the Israelis and the Palestinians. That outcome can only be achieved through direct negotiations. A vote on a unilateral UN resolution will likely set prospects for peace back years.

Our bilateral relationship is based on certain fundamental values. We urge you to vote those values, and to stand with the United States in not supporting unilateral action at the UN that would impede the peace we all seek.

Thank you for your consideration of our views.

Democratic Whip Steny H. Hoyer; Democratic Leader Nancy Pelosi; Rep. Gary Ackerman; Rep. Joe Baca; Rep. Shelley Berkley; Rep. Howard Berman; Rep. Madeleine Bordallo; Rep. Leonard Boswell; Rep. Dennis Cardoza; Rep. Russ Carnahan; Rep. David Cicilline; Rep. Emanuel Cleaver; Rep. Gerry Connolly; Rep. Jim Costa; Rep. Jerry Costello; Rep. Mark Critz; Rep. Joseph Crowley; Rep. Susan Davis; Rep. Rosa DeLauro; Rep. Ted Deutch; Rep. Eliot Engel; Rep. Charlie Gonzalez; Rep. Gene Green; Rep. Janice Hahn; Rep. Brian Higgins; Rep. Kathy Hochul; Rep. Tim Holden; Rep. Steve Israel; Rep. William Keating; Rep. Larry Kissell; Rep. James Langevin; Rep. John Larson; Rep. Sander Levin; Rep. Dan Lipinski; Rep. Nita Lowey; Rep. Carolyn Maloney; Rep. James McGovern; Rep. Gregory Meeks; Rep. Michael Michaud; Rep. Chris Murphy; Rep. Jerrold Nadler; Rep. Eleanor Holmes Norton; Rep. Bill Owens; Rep. Gary Peters; Rep. Steven Rothman; Rep. C.A. Dutch Ruppersberger; Rep. John Sarbanes; Rep. Janice Schakowsky; Rep. Adam Schiff; Rep. Allyson Schwartz; Rep. David Scott; Rep. Brad Sherman; Rep. Heath Shuler; Rep. Albio Sires; Rep. Betty Sutton; Rep. Edolphus Towns; Rep. Debbie Wasserman Schultz; Rep. Henry Waxman.