

Congressman Ron Paul U.S. House of Representatives May 2, 2002

Statement in Support of a Balanced Approach to the Middle East Peace Process

MR. PAUL: Mr. Speaker, this legislation could not have come at a worse time in the ongoing Middle East crisis. Just when we have seen some positive signs that the two sides may return to negotiations toward a peaceful settlement, Congress has jumped into the fray on one side of the conflict. I do not believe that this body wishes to de-rail the slight progress that seems to have come from the Administration's more even-handed approach over the past several days. So why is it that we are here today ready to pass legislation that clearly and openly favors one side in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict?

There are many troubling aspects to this legislation. The legislation says that "the number of Israelis killed during that time [since September 2000] by suicide terrorist attacks alone, on a basis proportional to the United States population, is approximately 9,000, three times the number killed in the terrorist attacks on New York and Washington on September 11, 2001." This kind of numbers game with the innocent dead strikes me as terribly disrespectful and completely unhelpful.

It is, when speaking of the dead, the one-sidedness of this bill that is so unfortunate. How is it that the side that loses seven people to every one on the other side is portrayed as the sole aggressor and condemned as terrorist? This is only made worse by the fact that Palestinian deaths are seen in the Arab world as being American-inspired, as it is our weapons that are being used against them. This bill just reinforces negative perceptions of the United States in that part of the world. What might be the consequences of this? I think we need to stop and think about that for a while. We in this body have a Constitutional responsibility to protect the national security of the United States. This one-sided intervention in a far-off war has the potential to do great harm to our national security.

Perhaps this is why the Administration views this legislation as "not a very helpful approach" to the situation in the Middle East. In my view, it is bad enough that we are intervening at all in this conflict, but this legislation strips any lingering notion that the United States intends to be an honest broker. It states clearly that the leadership of one side - the Palestinians - is bad and supports terrorism just at a time when this Administration negotiates with both sides in an

attempt to bring peace to the region. Talk about undermining the difficult efforts of the president and the State Department. What incentive does Palestinian leader Yasser Arafat or his organization have to return to the negotiating table if we as "honest broker" make it clear that in Congress's eyes, the Palestinians are illegitimate terrorists? Must we become so involved in this far-off conflict that we are forced to choose between Arafat and Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon? The United States Congress should not, Constitutionally, be in the business of choosing who gets to lead which foreign people.

Many people of various religious backgrounds seem determined to portray what is happening in the Middle East as some kind of historic/religious struggle, where one side is pre-ordained to triumph and destroy the other. Even some in this body have embraced this notion. Surely the religious component that some interject into the conflict rouses emotions and adds fuel to the fire. But this is dangerous thinking. Far from a great holy war, the Middle East conflict is largely about what most wars are about: a struggle for land and resources in a part of the world where both are scarce. We must think and act rationally, with this fact clearly in mind.

Just as with our interventionism in other similar struggles around the world, our meddling in the Middle East has unforeseen consequences. Our favoritism of one side has led to the hatred of America and Americans by the other side. We are placing our country in harm's way with this approach. It is time to step back and look at our policy in the Middle East. After 24 years of the "peace process" and some 300 *billion* of our dollars, we are no closer to peace than when President Carter concluded the Camp David talks.

Mr. Speaker, any other policy that had so utterly failed over such a long period of time would likely come under close scrutiny here. Why is it that when it comes to interventionism in the Middle East conflict we continue down this unproductive and very expensive road?