



# Congressional Record

PROCEEDINGS AND DEBATES OF THE 107<sup>th</sup> CONGRESS, FIRST SESSION

Vol. 148

WASHINGTON, TUESDAY, APRIL 9, 2002

No. 37

## Senate

### STATEMENT OF U.S. SENATOR DIANNE FEINSTEIN

#### *A Last, Best Chance to Restore Peace in the Middle East*

Madame President, it has become very clear to me, and I think to others, that the linchpin to stabilizing the Middle East Region, and to also developing an allied coalition of Arab nations in the war on terrorism, is the resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Unfortunately in the past two weeks, while Congress has been on recess, we have seen an escalation of violence. I strongly believe that Yasser Arafat must shut down the suicide bombers or there will be no opportunity for peace in the Middle East.

The crown prince of Saudi Arabia expressed a vision for a peace plan. Secretary Powell is in the area to see if he can capitalize on this vision and restore peace and stability and at least achieve a cease fire. His job is a difficult one.

The suicide bombings are a potent weapon and they have been precisely calculated to destroy any chance for peace. If these suicide bombers can not be stopped, the situation can only deteriorate and the result will be full-scale military conflagration.

Israel can not be expected to place a limit on its own self-defense or end her effort to capture terrorists so long as fanatics on the Palestinian side continue to plot and carry out these attacks. Indeed, some thirty years ago, I recall hearing former Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir say

*“we are not going to die so that the world will think well of us.”* Well, an overwhelming majority of the Israeli people still feel the same, and believe – as I do – that Israel has a legitimate right of self-defense.

Forces under the control of Yasser Arafat have been directly involved in perpetrating the recent wave of deadly terrorist attacks against Israeli civilians:

Many of these recent attacks have been carried out by Arafat-affiliated groups, such as the Al Aqsa Brigade, recently designated by the State Department as a foreign terrorist organization, and the Tanzim. These are parts of his own military apparatus.

During the week of Passover, 46 Israelis were killed and more than 120 wounded. In March alone, 125 Israelis were killed in the attacks which culminated in the bombing of the Passover ceremony in Netanya.

According to documents recently seized by the Israeli military from Palestinian Authority headquarters, one of Arafat’s top advisers who works out of his office is directly involved in financing the illegal weapons purchases and terror activities of the Al Aqsa Brigade.

This same Palestinian Authority official was directly involved in efforts to illegally smuggle in more than 50 tons of arms from Iran a few months ago.

Arafat resumed using terror as a

tactic after he walked away from Israel’s historic peace concessions at Camp David in 2000.

The offer placed on the table at Camp David may not have been perfect, although I happen to believe that it was excellent, giving the Palestinians 96 percent of what they wanted.

The Palestinians have not put an offer on the table. Rather, they opted for violence, and, since the fall of 2000, Arafat and his forces have engaged in hundreds of acts of terror against Israel, principally targeted at civilians:

Arafat and other Palestinian Authority officials have been directly involved in inciting violence against Israel;

Arafat and other Palestinian Authority officials have been directly involved in failing to thwart terrorist operations because they know how powerful those operations are;

Arafat and other Palestinian Authority officials have been directly involved in releasing terrorist suspects rather than arresting them; and

Arafat and other Palestinian Authority officials have been directly involved in failing to confiscate the weapons of terrorist suspects.

All of these actions are required under the terms of peace agreements he signed and to which he claims to

still be committed.

So why is all of this happening? I believe there is a hidden agenda and that hidden agenda is to drive out the Jewish people and create a Palestinian state, which includes Israel. This has been the Palestinians quest. Many of us hoped that through the Oslo process, this quest could have been changed. But I am increasingly beginning to believe it has not changed.

It may be unreasonable to expect that Arafat will be 100 percent successful in bringing Hamas and Islamic Jihad totally under his control. But he can control Fatah and the Al Aqsa brigades and the Tanzim. So far, it is impossible to make the argument that he has even really tried. We must remember that Yasser Arafat has rejected all Israeli peace plans. And he rejected General Zinni's recent cease fire plan which Israel accepted.

General Zinni went to the Palestinians and said, "what do you need?" He went to the Israelis and said "what do you need?" He then put them together and presented each other with a cease-fire plan. The Israelis accepted, the Palestinians did not. So one must believe that the Palestinians could stop this violence if they wanted to.

Israeli soldiers are now going "door to door." If they retreat, I believe it will back to suicide bombings as usual. In the past two weeks:

There have been no suicide bombings since the last bombing on March 31 at the Haifa restaurant which killed 14 people.

The Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) have arrested roughly 1,500 people and placed 500 on the wanted lists.

The Israeli Defense Forces have captured more than 2,000 weapons of various types, including: thousands of guns and ammunition;

44 combat vests and suicide belts; more than 60 pounds of high explosives; nearly 50 rocket

propelled grenades and launchers; and night vision equipment and sniper rifles.

The IDF has also discovered 11 weapons and explosives laboratories.

In the final analysis, if there is to be a peaceful resolution of the crisis -- and if there is to be a Palestinian state alongside Israel -- Mr. Arafat must make every effort to take the measures necessary to bring the violence to an end. That is the responsibility he bears as a leader if he wants to see his people truly live in peace and freedom.

If Secretary Powell is unable to make concrete progress in ending the violence and moving the peace process forward, I intend to shortly move forward on an updated version of the Middle East Peace Compliance legislation that I introduced with Senator McConnell last fall.

The stakes are enormous. As an editorial last Thursday in the *Washington Post* put it, and I find myself strongly agreeing:

*"...[I]t should not be hard to agree that a person who detonates himself in a pizza parlor or a discotheque filled with children, spraying scrap metal and nails in an effort to kill and maim as many of them as possible, has done something evil that can only discredit and damage whatever cause he hopes to advance. That Muslim governments cannot agree on this is shameful evidence of their own moral and political corruption."*

And,

*"The Palestinian national cause will never recover — nor should it — until its leadership is willing to break definitively with the bombers. And Muslim states that support such sickening carnage will risk not just stigma but their own eventual self-destruction."*

So, either terror ends or full scale war begins. This is the way I see it. Hopefully, the world will respond.

Despite all that has happened, the United States can and should encourage Israel to sit down at the negotiating table for one final try. We should be responsible to get the Israelis to that table.

But if the United States is to do so, the Arab world must also rise to the occasion and exercise control over Arafat and Palestinian terrorists. That should be the responsibility of the Arab world.

I must say I was struck by the unhelpful nature of Ambassador Bandar bin Sultan's recent op-ed piece in the *Washington Post* ("Why Israel Must Stop the Terror," Friday, April 5, 2002). It seems to me that if there ever is a time for responsible Arab governments to shut down "suicide bombing" as an acceptable tactic for anything and push Yasser Arafat into a cease-fire, real negotiations and a peace plan, that time is now.

Both the Saudis and Egyptians are well known for seeking and destroying terrorists or others who threaten them, but they fail to allow Israel the right to do the same, or to destroy the "infrastructure" that organizes and arms the suicide bomber and recompenses the bomber's family. Suddenly those who kill and maim Israeli civilians are heroes — as long as it is only Israelis they kill.

Some believe that the Saudis want have it both ways — support Americans in our war against terrorism and support Yasser Arafat as he wages terror. Ambassador Bandar bin Sultan gives credibility to this argument.

Any premature withdrawal of Israeli troops before they are able to seek out and destroy the members of the terrorist network must be replaced by a serious commitment of the U.S. and all moderate Arab states to stop the terrorist bombing. If it is not, then this country's "war against terror" will be mortally wounded by hypocrisy.

I would suggest that Secretary Colin Powell pick up the Saudi peace plan and place it squarely on the table of world opinion with the following caveats:

1.) Withdrawal of Israel to the 1967 borders and agreement to the creation of a Palestinian State be conditioned by:

a.) Defensible borders;

b.) A division of Jerusalem along the lines of that proposed by former President Clinton at Camp David.

2.) A 5-year phase-out of Israeli settlements in the West Bank and the Gaza Strip. This is a difficult pill to swallow but it is also one that has to be done if there is going to be true peace and the ability of an Israeli state to stand side-by-side with a Palestinian state.

3.) No physical Palestinian right of return but just compensation as provided for in United Nations Resolution 194.

4.) All suicide bombings stop or the agreement is invalidated.

5.) A peacekeeping and monitoring of the agreement by the U.N. and/or the U.S. over the 5 year period.

If it is true that all the Palestinians want is their own state and government, then they shall have it. If it is also true that what they really want is the destruction of the State of Israel then this will become crystal clear to the world.

Israel has a right to live in peace and security within internationally recognized borders, and only Arab states committed to peace help bring this to a peaceful end. The ongoing wave of terror threatens the survival of Israel as a free, democratic and civilized society, and risks engulfing the entire Middle East in chaos and war.

Israel must fight against this terror just as we do, as the United States must fight and destroy Al Qaeda and other terrorist groups with global reach. And I firmly believe that the United States should stand by Israel's side in the quest for peace

and security.