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## *House of Representatives*

### **The Gaza Flotilla Incident: Israel Deserves Unequivocal, Robust, and Vigorous Support**

**Mr. SMITH of New Jersey**

Madam Speaker, I rise today to call on the president to give Israel the unequivocal, robust, and vigorous support it deserves. Since the May 31<sup>st</sup> Gaza flotilla incident, Israel has been under media attack, and even in the past few days, many articles in major international newspapers take a grossly anti-Israeli slant. Make no mistake about it, the purpose of the flotilla was to provoke an incident, thereby to set up an international media campaign against Israel. The flotilla was an aggressive and hypocritical attempt to manipulate world public opinion and isolate Israel. Thankfully it has not worked in the United States, where Rasmussen polling shows that, despite the anti-Israel bias of so much media coverage, less than 20% of Americans think that the Israeli government is to blame for the deaths that resulted from the incident.

Madam Speaker, the facts on the incident were clear within 48 hours, and it's high time our government sent a much more powerful and unambiguous message: that the United States fully supports Israel's

action to intercept the flotilla. The administration should emphasize that Israel's action was legal, that it was right, and that the U.S. stands with Israel, without any 'ifs,' or 'buts,' or 'so long as,' or any other qualifiers.

It's a matter of record that on May 25<sup>th</sup> the Israeli government offered to offload, at its port of Ashdod, the humanitarian aid the flotilla carried, and to have UN personnel deliver the aid to Gaza. On that same day, the Israeli government also stated it would not permit the flotilla to break its blockade of Gaza—which is not only legal under international law, but, I believe, it is also just, given the rampant maritime arms smuggling, the 7,000 rocket attacks Hamas has launched on Israel from Gaza since 2005, and the unlimited aid that can flow to Gaza through proper checkpoints.

Madam Speaker, the Turkish group that organized the flotilla has documented ties to Hamas, which the State Department has determined is a Foreign Terrorist Organization. Radicals with ties to other

terrorist groups were aboard the ships. The flotilla launch was marked by violent, anti-Semitic rallies. Flotilla participants spoke to Al-Jazeera of martyrdom, and sang intifada songs. All this shows the grotesque hypocrisy of those who would portray the flotilla's participants as harmless peace activists.

Madam Speaker, the response of the Israeli government was extraordinarily restrained and responsible. Israeli troops boarded the ships in the flotilla carrying paint-ball rifles—but when the crew beat them with iron rods, stabbed and lynched them, and threw one of them off the deck,

they got the order to defend themselves with their sidearms. This too was right. Every government permits its troops to defend themselves when they are attacked.

I call on President Obama to give Israel our government's full support and to make unmistakably clear our government's position that Israel, in its response to the Gaza flotilla, was fully in the right. Whether or not the Israeli government decides to adjust the blockade of Gaza, our government must make it perfectly clear to all that we will never permit an anti-Israel media campaign to isolate America's most faithful friend in the Middle East.