

The Acting CHAIR. The gentleman from New York is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. NADLER. I will be brief.

First of all, I'm told that the amount in the bill here, \$200 million, is essentially the amount that is being spent now; so this is not really a reduction.

□ 1720

Secondly, I just want to add one thing to what the gentlelady from Minnesota said. Over the break we just had, I went to a food pantry operated by a church on Coney Island. There was a line out the door of about 70 or 80 people. They were giving food packets 3 days out of every month; 3 days out of every month, and trying to figure out how to scrounge enough money to give food packets 4 days out of every month. And, of course, we are cutting the budget for Women, Infants and Children. We are cutting the budget for food aid. We are cutting the budget for food stamps. We can maintain the military bands and not expand them. We have to keep this in perspective.

Yes, I love John Philip Sousa. I love military bands. I love marching bands. But people have to eat. And we are being savaged in the budget that we are passing and in the negotiations on the debt ceiling. We are being savaged on things for people to eat.

This seems the least we can do.

Mr. CARTER. Will the gentleman yield?

Mr. NADLER. I yield to the gentleman from Texas.

Mr. CARTER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

I hear what you're saying about these good programs that are being cut and reduced. And if this actually put money in the pockets of those programs, it would be one thing. But the facts are that the cuts that we do here do not change any amount of spending that the DOD does. These people continue to have military jobs, and they continue to get a paycheck.

Mr. NADLER. Reclaiming my time, the limitation in the bill will simply make sure that it doesn't expand. The fact is that with all of the negotiations going on and the debt ceiling and everything else, there is going to be pressure to cut everything. This amendment simply says we can expand here even though we are cutting far more important things. I think the language in the bill is sufficient. The committee did a wise job. I urge opposition to the amendment.

I yield back the balance of my time.

The Acting CHAIR. The question is on the amendment offered by the gentleman from Texas (Mr. CARTER).

The amendment was agreed to.

Mr. YOUNG of Florida. Madam Chairman, I move that the Committee do now rise.

The motion was agreed to.

Accordingly, the Committee rose; and the Speaker pro tempore (Mr. CARTER) having assumed the chair, Mrs. MILLER of Michigan, Acting Chair of

the Committee of the Whole House on the state of the Union, reported that that Committee, having had under consideration the bill (H.R. 2219) making appropriations for the Department of Defense for the fiscal year ending September 30, 2012, and for other purposes, had come to no resolution thereon.

ANNOUNCEMENT BY THE SPEAKER PRO TEMPORE

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX, the Chair will postpone further proceedings today on motions to suspend the rules on which a recorded vote or the yeas and nays are ordered, or on which the vote incurs objection under clause 6 of rule XX.

Record votes on postponed questions will be taken later.

□ 1730

REAFFIRMING COMMITMENT TO NEGOTIATED SETTLEMENT OF ISRAELI-PALESTINIAN CONFLICT

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and agree to the resolution (H. Res. 268) reaffirming the United States commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations, and for other purposes.

The Clerk read the title of the resolution.

The text of the resolution is as follows:

H. RES. 268

Whereas the policy of the United States since 2002 has been to support a two-state solution to the Palestinian-Israeli conflict;

Whereas a true and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians can only be achieved through direct negotiations between the parties and acceptance of each other's right to exist;

Whereas Palestine Liberation Organization Chair Yassir Arafat pledged in a letter to Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin on September 9, 1993, that "all outstanding issues relating to permanent status will be resolved through negotiations" a pledge that served as a critical basis for the Israeli-PLO Declaration of Principles signed 4 days later;

Whereas the unity agreement signed by Fatah and Hamas on May 4, 2011, was reached without Hamas being required to renounce violence, accept Israel's right to exist, and accept prior agreements made by the Palestinians (the "Quartet conditions");

Whereas Hamas, an organization responsible for the death of more than 500 innocent civilians, including 24 United States citizens, has been designated by the United States Government as a Foreign Terrorist Organization and a specially designated terrorist organization;

Whereas Hamas kidnapped and has held Israeli sergeant Gilad Shalit in captivity in violation of international norms since June 25, 2006;

Whereas Hamas continues to forcefully reject the possibility of peace with Israel;

Whereas Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has accepted a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and has consistently advocated for immediate direct negotiations with the Palestinians, who, in

turn, have prevented negotiations by insisting on unprecedented pre-conditions;

Whereas, on April 22, 2009, Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton stated, "We will not deal with nor in any way fund a Palestinian government that includes Hamas unless and until Hamas has renounced violence, recognized Israel and agreed to follow the previous obligations of the Palestinian Authority";

Whereas United States Ambassador to the United Nations, Susan Rice, stated on February 18, 2011, that it was "unwise" for the United Nations to attempt to resolve key issues between the Israelis and Palestinians;

Whereas Palestinian leaders are pursuing a coordinated strategy to seek recognition of a Palestinian state within the United Nations and directly from foreign governments;

Whereas, on December 15, 2010, the House adopted House Resolution 1765, which reaffirmed that the House of Representatives supports a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulting in two states, a democratic, Jewish state of Israel and a viable, democratic Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace, security, and mutual recognition and opposes any attempt to establish or seek recognition of a Palestinian state outside of an agreement negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians;

Whereas current United States law precludes assistance to a Palestinian Authority which shares power with Hamas unless that Authority publicly accepts Israel's right to exist and adheres to all prior agreements and understandings with the United States and Israel;

Whereas the United States annually provides more than \$550 million annually and has provided more than \$3.5 billion cumulatively in direct bilateral assistance to the Palestinians, who are among the world's largest recipients of foreign aid per capita;

Whereas United States aid to the Palestinians is predicated on a good faith commitment from the Palestinians to the peace process including direct negotiations with Israel;

Whereas Palestinian abandonment of the Quartet conditions and inclusion of Hamas in a government would jeopardize the positive steps the Palestinian Authority has taken in building institutions and improving security in the West Bank in recent years; and

Whereas efforts to form a unity government without accepting the Quartet conditions, to bypass negotiations and unilaterally declare a Palestinian state, or to appeal to the United Nations or other international forums, or directly to foreign governments for recognition of a Palestinian state, violate the underlying principles of the Oslo Accords, the Road Map, and other relevant Middle East peace process agreements, all of which require resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through direct negotiations only: Now, therefore, be it

Resolved, That the House of Representatives—

(1) reaffirms its strong support for a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulting in two states, a democratic, Jewish state of Israel and a viable, democratic Palestinian state, living side-by-side in peace, security, and mutual recognition;

(2) states its firm belief that any Palestinian unity government must publicly and formally forswear terrorism, accept Israel's right to exist, and reaffirm previous agreements made with Israel;

(3) reiterates its strong opposition to any attempt to establish or seek recognition of a Palestinian state outside of an agreement negotiated between Israel and the Palestinians;

(4) urges Palestinian leaders to—

(A) ensure that any Palestinian government will seek peace with Israel;

(B) cease all efforts at circumventing the negotiation process, including through a unilateral declaration of statehood or by seeking recognition of a Palestinian state from other nations or the United Nations;

(C) resume direct negotiations with Israel immediately and without preconditions; and

(D) take appropriate measures to counter incitement to violence and fulfill all prior Palestinian commitments, including dismantling the terrorist infrastructure embodied in Hamas;

(5) supports the Administration's opposition to a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and its use of the veto at the United Nations Security Council on February 18, 2011, the most recent example of a longstanding United States policy of vetoing unbalanced United Nations Security Council resolutions regarding Israel and the Israeli-Palestinian peace process;

(6) calls upon the Administration to announce that it will veto any resolution on Palestinian statehood that comes before the United Nations Security Council which is not a result of agreements reached between Israel and the Palestinians;

(7) calls upon the Administration to lead a diplomatic effort to oppose a unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state and to oppose recognition of a Palestinian state by other nations, within the United Nations, and in other international forums prior to achievement of a final agreement between Israel and the Palestinians;

(8) affirms that Palestinian efforts to circumvent direct negotiations and pursue recognition of statehood prior to agreement with Israel will harm United States-Palestinian relations and will have serious implications for the United States assistance programs for the Palestinians and the Palestinians Authority;

(9) supports the position taken by Secretary of State Hillary Rodham Clinton on April 22, 2009, that the United States "will not deal with or in any way fund a Palestinian government that includes Hamas unless and until Hamas has renounced violence, recognized Israel and agreed to follow the previous obligations of the Palestinian Authority.";

(10) urges the administration to consider suspending assistance to the Palestinian Authority pending a review of the unity agreement; and

(11) reaffirms the United States statutory requirement precluding assistance to a Palestinian Authority that includes Hamas unless that Authority and all its ministers publicly accept Israel's right to exist and all prior agreements and understandings with the United States and Israel.

The SPEAKER pro tempore (Mrs. MILLER of Michigan). Pursuant to the rule, the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) and the gentleman from California (Mr. BERMAN) each will control 20 minutes.

The Chair recognizes the gentlewoman from Florida.

GENERAL LEAVE

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I ask unanimous consent that all Members may have 5 legislative days in which to revise and extend their remarks and to include extraneous material on House Resolution 268.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Is there objection to the request of the gentlewoman from Florida?

There was no objection.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield myself such time as I may consume.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 268, sponsored by Majority Leader CANTOR and Minority Whip HOYER, and would like to thank them for their leadership in bringing this important resolution to the floor today.

We face a perilous juncture in the history of the Middle East. Our adversaries are far from dormant, and are focused on an international effort to isolate and demonize Israel. That is why it is all the more important for the United States to stand by our democratic ally at this critical time. So let's get the facts straight, Madam Speaker.

As even Secretary Clinton noted, this Israeli Government has made unprecedented concessions in pursuit of peace. Israel has always been willing and able to make the tough sacrifices. Israel has proven its commitment to peace. Unfortunately, Israel does not have a partner for peace and security as the Palestinian leadership continues to never miss an opportunity to miss an opportunity.

Abu Mazen can utter all the right words to the Obama administration and the Europeans, who appear gullible enough to believe him; but the problem is, whenever the Palestinian leadership, past and present, has actually been asked to sign a peace agreement with Israel, it has always refused. Abu Mazen also continues to refuse to recognize Israel as a Jewish state, yet demands that Israel recognize a Palestinian state; and the media he controls through the Palestinian Authority publishes a nonstop barrage of anti-Semitic propaganda.

The Palestinian Authority has rejected every offer of peace from Israel. The PA has refused to negotiate directly with Israel. The PA has refused to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state. It has failed to crack down on violent extremism and anti-Israel incitement. Indeed, it has even tolerated and encouraged such behavior. It has also supported boycotts of Israeli goods, and the Palestinian Authority Prime Minister, whom some consider to be a moderate, even participated in a mass burning of such goods.

Instead of negotiating directly with Israel, the Palestinian Authority is pursuing unilateral recognition of a Palestinian state, from various foreign governments, with an eye to recognition of such a state by the U.N. this fall. Palestinian leaders also keep threatening violence to extract concessions.

Abu Mazen has not only failed to recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, but recently signed a coalition agreement with Hamas, which is committed to Israel's destruction.

To demonstrate that they are true partners for peace, what Palestinian leaders must do is simple, Madam Speaker—the opposite of what they

have been doing: sit down and negotiate directly with Israel, without preconditions; encourage Palestinians to accept Israel instead of tolerating and encouraging violent extremism and anti-Israel incitement; and recognize Israel's right to exist as a democratic Jewish state.

We must no longer demand that Israel take actions or make additional unilateral concessions that would compromise our democratic ally's safety and security.

Recent calls for Israel to return to the 1967 borders are unacceptable and dangerous. Continuing to provide assistance to the Palestinians—assistance amounting to \$2.5 billion in the last 5 years alone—is certainly not the answer. Congress must not agree to the administration's 2012 budget request, which would provide yet another \$400 million bailout to the West Bank and Gaza, including another \$200 million directly to the PA.

There are also many other steps that Congress and the administration can and must take to support our ally Israel and to encourage the advancement of peace and security in the region:

The U.S. could show its support for the Jewish state's sovereignty and right to exist by moving our Embassy to Jerusalem, Israel's eternal and undivided capital. We should demand that the United Nations stop its relentless activities to demonize Israel and the Jewish people, and put our money where our mouth is.

The most recent example of this bias is a cartoon posted by Richard Falk, which was apparently taken down just minutes ago. The U.N. Human Rights Council has appointed Mr. Falk as an "expert" to investigate and condemn Israel. I'm sure that the viewers could see or they could pull it up on the Internet what this cartoon depicts. It depicts Americans and Jews as blood-thirsty dogs.

This is not the first time that Mr. Falk has spread such venom. He has compared Israel's treatment of the Palestinians to the Holocaust, and has questioned the veracity of the 9/11 attacks, but he continues to work for the U.N. Human Rights Council, with over 20 percent of his expenses and staff support paid for by U.S. taxpayers.

Has the U.N. High Commissioner for Human Rights ever condemned Falk and demanded that he resign his U.N. post? Never. To the contrary, her office has published an attack by Falk on his critics. I understand that he says now that his account was hacked into and that he has taken that drawing down, but I say enough is enough.

The administration should withdraw from the biased Human Rights Council, and Congress should withhold funding from the council and other U.N. bodies that do not advance our national security interests and condition U.S. contributions on real reforms. What a concept.

Finally, Madam Speaker, instead of dealing directly with the Muslim

Brotherhood, which seeks Israel's destruction and condemned the killing of bin Laden, the U.S. should deny all legitimacy to that group no matter what fake name or label it now uses as it tries to camouflage itself into a legitimate political party in Egypt.

I am glad that this body is doing the right thing today, Madam Speaker. We have much more to do to defend our national security interests and our indispensable ally, Israel.

I thank the gentleman from Virginia, our distinguished majority leader, for authoring this important resolution.

Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. I rise in strong support of H. Res. 268, the Cantor-Hoyer resolution, and I yield myself 4 minutes.

Madam Speaker, I believe negotiations are the only path to a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For this reason, the United States Congress has every reason to be concerned about efforts by the Palestinian Authority leadership to attain recognition of statehood while bypassing the accepted negotiation process. These efforts run counter to the Palestinians' own internationally witnessed commitments at the 1991 Madrid Conference and under the 1993 Oslo agreement and the 2003 Roadmap.

That is but one reason I am deeply disappointed by the Palestinian leadership's recent push to seek recognition of an independent state at the United Nations. Indeed, even some Palestinian officials have acknowledged that such U.N. recognition of statehood gives the Palestinians nothing but an empty symbolic victory.

One thing is clear: There will be no recognition of Palestinian statehood by the Security Council, where I feel confident that the United States would use its veto, just as it has in the past, to prevent the passage of an unbalanced, anti-Israel resolution.

And what exactly would the U.N. General Assembly recognition of a Palestinian state do for the Palestinians? Absolutely nothing. It would not solve the Palestinians' need for recognized borders nor would it solve sensitive issues like the status of Jerusalem, water rights, or Palestinian refugees.

□ 1740

It would not enhance their prospect for successful negotiations. In fact, it would be seen by Israel and many others as an act of bad faith, creating yet another obstacle to successful talks.

As President Obama said in May, "For the Palestinians, efforts to delegitimize Israel will end in failure. Symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won't create an independent state." A glance at recent history shows that he's right. In 1988, Yasser Arafat declared a state

and garnered recognition from more than 100 nations. Now, 23 years later, there is still no Palestinian state. The Palestinian people don't want a bunch of declarations of statehood; they want a state—and they should have one through the only means possible for attaining one, negotiations with Israel.

I believe that Palestinian Authority President Abbas and Prime Minister Fayyad are committed to a peaceful resolution of their conflict with Israel. So I hope they will return to the negotiating table and abandon their flawed U.N. strategy.

The Congress has been very generous in its support of the Palestinian Authority's worthy efforts to build institutions and the economy in the West Bank. In fact, I believe we are the most generous nation in the world in that regard. So I think our Palestinian friends should understand that if they persist in pursuing a unilateralist path, inevitably, and however regrettably, there will be consequences for U.S.-Palestinian relationships.

Madam Speaker, I encourage all of my colleagues to support this important pro-negotiations, pro-peace resolution.

I reserve the balance of my time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am so pleased to yield 1 minute to our esteemed majority leader and co-author of this resolution, the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. CANTOR).

Mr. CANTOR. I thank the gentlelady, the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, and I thank the leadership of the gentleman from California as well in support of this resolution.

Madam Speaker, we call today on Hamas and the Palestinian Authority to renounce the path they have set in planning to announce statehood in the upcoming United Nations session. By threatening to sidestep the principles of the Oslo Accords, the Palestinian Authority is beginning to dismantle the framework of future peace process agreements.

We have seen the death and destruction that Hamas perpetrated against both Israeli civilians and the Palestinian people in the Gaza Strip, yet Hamas refuses to accept responsibility for its actions or rein in terrorists called to strike at the heart of the Israeli people.

Today, we ask and call upon the Palestinian Authority to return to the negotiating table and join the Israelis in direct discussions to end this conflict. Furthermore, we call on the leadership of the Palestinian Authority to renounce the violence Hamas condones and teaches to its followers.

This resolution, Madam Speaker, directs the Palestinian Authority to be responsible actors on the world stage and to return to negotiations. For far too long, the Palestinian Authority has not acted on behalf of its people. Cor-

ruption has caused many to discredit its legitimacy. The people of the region deserve an honest broker that accepts and respects the state of Israel.

Israel has stood by America in its fights against extremist ideology. Madam Speaker, we stand by Israel as our most valued ally in a region in need of more who respect freedom of speech and the free assembly of people, a region that, frankly, must follow the example set by Israel in its work in promotion of human progress.

It is time for the Palestinian Authority to accept a peaceful solution to this conflict and teach their children that violence is never the answer to their problems. The Palestinian Authority must understand that peace is only achievable when they are willing to recognize the legitimacy of Israel to exist as a Jewish state. And they must understand that the solution to this conflict will only come through direct negotiations with the Israelis, and not by circumventing the peace process through international parliamentary gimmickry.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the minority whip, the gentleman from Maryland (Mr. HOYER).

Mr. HOYER. I thank Mr. BERMAN for yielding. I thank Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN for bringing this resolution to the floor. And I am pleased to join my colleague and friend, Mr. CANTOR, in strong support of this resolution.

I believe there is only one lasting solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, a future of two states for two peoples living in security and peace with one another. Such a solution is in the best interests of regional peace and in the best interests of both parties. That is why I strongly believe that ensuring the long-term viability of the Jewish democratic State of Israel also requires supporting a homeland for the Palestinian people.

History teaches us that in conflicts such as this, one peace must be negotiated. It cannot and will not be imposed from outside or else it will rest on an unstable and temporary foundation. That is why I strongly oppose Palestinian efforts to impose a solution to the conflict at the United Nations, as well as Palestinian efforts to unilaterally declare statehood. I am concerned that a unilateral declaration will only encourage both sides to dig in and put a lasting negotiated peace further at risk.

As President Obama said, and as Mr. BERMAN has quoted—and I want to quote a little more of the President's remarks, but I will repeat some of what Mr. BERMAN said because I think it is relevant—I quote the President of the United States: "For the Palestinians, efforts to delegitimize Israel will end

in failure. Symbolic actions to isolate Israel at the United Nations in September won't create an independent state. Palestinian leaders will not achieve peace or prosperity if Hamas insists on a path of terror and rejection. And Palestinians will never realize their independence by denying the right of Israel to exist."

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BERMAN. I yield the gentleman 1 additional minute.

Mr. HOYER. I believe the President is absolutely correct. By passing this resolution, the House will make it clear that it agrees that a real peace can only come through negotiations between the two sides. That peace will only last if both sides buy into it. We all know that those negotiations have been and are now relatively nonexistent, and they will be difficult even having been entered into. They will be painful. They will require courage and sacrifice on both sides. But the hard way is also the right way. And if there is to be any hope of peace, as surely all of us pray there is, both sides must return to the table without preconditions.

I urge my colleagues to support this resolution. And I will continue to urge America's allies to stand against quick, unilateral, and ultimately unstable solutions to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

I thank the gentleman and the chair for bringing this resolution to the floor.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am so honored to yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Ohio (Mr. CHABOT), who is also the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Middle East and South Asia.

Mr. CHABOT. I thank the distinguished chair for yielding. Israel has no greater friend than ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN from Florida.

Despite some progress that has been made toward ensuring Israel's continued security, critical challenges still exist. Rejectionist elements within the Palestinian leadership still refuse to sit and negotiate in good faith even as Israel repeatedly expresses its commitment to the establishment of a Palestinian state. These elements spurn Israeli overtures and seek to establish a Palestinian state unilaterally through a vote of the U.N. General Assembly.

Although short-term security may be achievable unilaterally, peace is not. Palestinian rejectionism, whether by Hamas or Fatah, must be abandoned. U.S. taxpayer money should, under no circumstances, go to the Palestinian government, whose members do not all abide by the Three Quartet principles: recognizing the state of Israel's right to exist; renouncing terrorism; and abiding by previous agreements.

□ 1750

And just as the U.S. should not support a Palestinian government whose

very composition is anathema to peace, so, too, should it not support an institution that offers an easy alternative to genuine peace through negotiations. That is why I recently introduced a resolution calling on the administration to cut all funding to the U.N. General Assembly should it vote to recognize a Palestinian state in direct defiance of the U.N. Security Council and the U.N. Charter. True Israeli-Palestinian peace will only be made between two peoples, Israelis and Palestinians, and not the 191 other members of the General Assembly.

Israel, like the United States, welcomes those who would make peace even as it fights those who would make war. Time and again, Israel has demonstrated its commitment to a Palestinian state living as its neighbor in peace and security, but there are no shortcuts on the path to this outcome, and there is no getting around the hard concessions that will have to be made. The U.S. must now stand with Israel and against those who would obstruct rather than advance the cause of peace.

I urge the adoption of this resolution.

Mr. BERMAN. I am very pleased to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from New York (Mr. NADLER).

Mr. NADLER. I thank the gentleman for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise in support of this resolution, which reaffirms support for a solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict reached through negotiations between the Palestinians and the Israelis, and our opposition to any unilateral declaration of Palestinian statehood, or recognition of such a declaration by the United Nations.

How can a dispute between two peoples ever be resolved by the unilateral decision of one? The path to peace has been clear for many years, and provided for by Security Council resolutions and by the 1993 Oslo Accords signed by the Israelis and the Palestinians. All these agreements provide for settlement negotiated between the parties, a settlement that will result in two states, a Jewish state of Israel and a state of Palestine.

Unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state is a way of avoiding negotiations on the tough issues: final borders, secure borders, Jerusalem, and the status of the Palestinian refugees of 1948 and their descendants. It is an attempt by the Palestinians to delegitimize Israel, to impose indefensible borders unilaterally, and to get their state while retaining the ability to keep fighting Israel and to use the refugees' alleged "right of return" to undermine the survival of Israel as Jewish state.

The Palestinian Authority should instead explain to its people that a Palestinian state can be achieved only by conceding the right of a Jewish state to live in peace and security next door. And, for that to happen, there must be a negotiated agreement recognizing two states for two peoples. Evading a negotiated agreement is a formula for future war.

I urge all Members to support this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 2 minutes to the gentleman from New Jersey (Mr. SMITH), who is also the chairman of the Foreign Affairs Subcommittee on Africa, Global Health, and Human Rights.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. I thank my good friend for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of H. Res. 268, and deeply appreciate Majority Leader CANTOR; STENY HOYER; obviously the chairwoman, ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN; and Mr. BERMAN, the ranking member, for authoring this resolution reaffirming the U.S. commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

H. Res. 268 speaks in very clear, unambiguous language about what this means: It means settlement through direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations rather than through a highly misguided, counterproductive, unilateral Palestinian declaration of statehood, or by Palestinians seeking recognition from other states or through the United Nations, sadly, the latter, a haven of anti-Israel and even sometimes anti-Semitic activity.

Direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been a keystone of U.S. and Israeli policy toward the region for decades, and even PLO Chair Yasser Arafat pledged to accept this way back in 1993. Unfortunately, Hamas in its 2011 unity agreement with Fatah did not accept this commitment, nor did it renounce violence.

Madam Speaker, H. Res. 268 also outlines what a negotiated settlement should entail: negotiations in which each accepts the other's right to exist, and which are aimed at a two-state solution. Again, these have been key points of U.S. and Israeli policy, but Hamas, a State Department foreign terrorist organization, has rejected them.

The fact is, Madam Speaker, that U.S. law precludes foreign assistance to a P.A. which shares power with Hamas unless the P.A. publicly accepts Israel's right to exist and adheres to all prior agreements between Israel and the PLO. The U.S. Government has been extremely generous to the P.A., providing over \$550 million annually.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I yield the gentleman an additional 30 seconds.

Mr. SMITH of New Jersey. So the resolution wisely reaffirms this law and urges the administration to consider suspending assistance to the P.A. pending a review of the unity agreement between Fatah and Hamas.

It is our policy, and it is Israel's policy, Madam Speaker, to promote a realistic, sustainable peace process, one that entails negotiations between the two parties to the conflict, represented by groups that seek a two-state solution, and renounces violence. Hamas has shown none of that.

Mr. BERMAN. I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentledady from Florida (Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ).

Ms. WASSERMAN SCHULTZ. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 268.

This important resolution reaffirms our Nation's unwavering commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Israel-Palestinian conflict, which can only be achieved through direct Israeli-Palestinian peace talks.

Since 1948, when the United States became the first country to recognize the Jewish State of Israel, we have always stood by her side as a strong ally and friend. This resolution is no exception. As each day brings a new set of complex changes to the Middle East, it is more vital than ever that we protect and strengthen that friendship. From insisting that Hamas reject terrorism and accept Israel's right to exist, to supporting the Obama administration's opposition to the unilateral declaration of a Palestinian state, H. Res. 268 reaffirms the sense of the Congress and the Obama administration that we must continue to stand strong with our democratic ally against hostile enemies and attempts at delegitimization.

In doing so, we continue to demonstrate our stalwart support that we have provided as a country for more than six decades.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, it is indeed an honor to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Florida, my colleague, Colonel West, an American hero.

Mr. WEST. I thank the gentledady for yielding.

Madam Speaker, I stand today in support of House Resolution 268, which does reaffirm the strong support of this body politic to a negotiated solution for Israel and Palestine.

The important thing that we have to see happen, though, is to urge the Palestinian leaders to first and foremost ensure that any Palestinian government will seek peace with Israel, as we sat here and listened to Prime Minister Netanyahu say, "There will not be peace until we have a dedicated peace partner."

The second thing, we must make sure that the leaders of the Palestinian people cease all efforts at circumventing the negotiation process, including through a unilateral declaration of statehood or by seeking recognition of a Palestinian state from other nations or the United Nations.

But third, and probably most important, that the Palestinian leaders must take appropriate measures to counter the incitement to violence and fulfill all prior Palestinian commitments, including dismantling the terrorist infrastructure that is embodied with Hamas.

Israel is a bright and shining beacon which is in a sea of despots, dictators, theocrats, and autocrats. The Palestinian leaders can choose to be a part of this light.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, the gentleman from Connecticut (Mr. MURPHY).

Mr. MURPHY of Connecticut. I thank the ranking member.

I rise today in support of House Resolution 268 that affirms the United States' support for a negotiated solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict.

Setting preconditions on negotiations is just an excuse to maintain the status quo. If President Abbas is serious about peace, then he should focus all of his energies and all the energies of his people on negotiations with Israel. An agreement won't be easy, but the outlines of an agreement are well-known. All that is really necessary now is leadership from both sides.

So this leadership sets firmly U.S. policy. We are a rock solid friend of Israel, and anyone else who seeks peace with them. But this also means that we stand against those who seek to circumvent the peace process by running to the U.N. General Assembly for a declaration that may score political points but is going to set back the peace process for years.

Now more than ever, Madam Speaker, with turmoil on every border of Israel, we need to stand with them as an ally. We want peace. Israel wants peace. Peace can only happen with negotiations. All we are missing is a true Palestinian partner.

□ 1800

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I would like to yield 2 minutes to another Florida colleague (Mrs. ADAMS), a veteran of the U.S. Air Force.

Mrs. ADAMS. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 268, which would reaffirm America's commitment to a negotiated solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict resulting in two states: a democratic Jewish State of Israel and a democratic Palestinian state living in peace and mutual recognition.

For six decades, throughout 12 American Presidents and 12 Israeli Prime Ministers, Israel has stood as a beacon of democracy in an unstable region and has remained a loyal and committed friend to the United States. As Americans, we must continue to honor the promise of democracy and liberty around the world—we owe no less than that to our closest friend in the Middle East. This is why we'll continue to stand with Israel, continue to honor our friendship, and to continue my commitment to encouraging a negotiated peace that both the Israelis and the Palestinians have agreed to—not one that is imposed upon them.

The United States should not and cannot dictate how peace can be reached with the Palestinians, especially when they are willing to allow Hamas, a terrorist organization, to participate in any of their elections. This is why I strongly disagree with

the President's strategy to force Israel into a peace they have not negotiated.

Again, I want to rise in support of H. Res. 268. I believe that the only peace will be a negotiated peace between Israel and the Palestinians without any influence of terrorists.

Mr. BERMAN. I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to my friend and partner in so many of these efforts, the gentledady from New York, the ranking member of the House Foreign Operations Subcommittee of Appropriations, Mrs. LOWEY.

Mrs. LOWEY. Madam Speaker, I rise in strong support of the resolution, and I thank the ranking member for his leadership, and the chair.

Last week I traveled to Israel, where I saw the determination, ingenuity, and resourcefulness of that young nation. In a volatile region, Israel is a strong democracy. Despite many setbacks, the country still longs for peace. Yet unilateral actions by the Palestinian Authority diminish prospects for negotiations and threaten progress.

We must do everything within our power to stand by our ally Israel, to persuade the Palestinians to abandon their efforts in the U.N., break with the terrorist group Hamas, and return to the negotiating table with Israel without preconditions. This resolution is a strong statement in support of peace. I urge my colleagues to vote "yes."

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1 minute to the gentleman from Arizona (Mr. GOSAR).

(Mr. GOSAR asked and was given permission to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GOSAR. Madam Speaker, I rise today in strong support of House Resolution 268.

This resolution reaffirms congressional support for direct negotiations between Israeli and Palestinian leaders in an effort to achieve peace in this over six-decade-long struggle.

While the Palestinian pursuit of a state is understandable, the attempt to bypass the peace process by going first to the United Nations is inappropriate. It is a disgrace and an offense to the U.N. Charter and all acceptable norms of international law to create or recognize a state that itself will not first forsake terrorism, violence, ethnic hatred, and genocide.

If a vote for Palestinian statehood comes to the U.N. Security Council, the U.S. must veto and do so until a peace agreement is achieved and maintained between the Israelis and the Palestinians.

Now is not the time for either party to remove themselves from the negotiating table. Peace will not be attained with only one side seeking it. I urge my colleagues to reassert American commitment to direct negotiations by supporting H. Res. 268.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, may I ask for the time remaining on each side.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman from California has 9 minutes remaining, and the gentlelady from Florida has 3½ minutes remaining.

Mr. BERMAN. I am pleased to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Florida, a member of the House Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. DEUTCH.

Mr. DEUTCH. I thank the ranking member from California, and I thank the chair of the committee.

Madam Speaker, I rise to support House Resolution 268, reaffirming our Nation's unyielding support for our great ally Israel. Madam Speaker, the lack of progress in the peace process thus far stems from the Palestinians' refusal to negotiate despite historic Israeli concessions. They could choose dialogue, they could choose peace—instead they have chosen violence and hatred by partnering with Hamas.

Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with an organization that refuses to accept the internationally recognized Quartet principles, continues to murder innocent Israelis, and refuses to free Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit.

This resolution comes to us as the PA pursues plans to avoid direct negotiations altogether and unilaterally declare statehood at the United Nations.

Madam Speaker, just weeks ago here in this Chamber, Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu reminded us what we clearly already know—that peace cannot be imposed; peace must be negotiated. By passing this resolution, Congress will uphold this principle, will reaffirm our commitment to Israel's security, and will express our unyielding support for the Israeli people in their quest for a true and lasting peace. I urge a "yes" vote on this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am very pleased to yield 1 minute to the distinguished member of our committee, the ranking member of the Western Hemisphere Subcommittee, the gentleman from New York (Mr. ENGEL).

Mr. ENGEL. I rise in strong support of the resolution.

I come from the premise that if you want to work out a disagreement, you sit face to face at the negotiating table and negotiate. That's what happened in Ireland, and it should happen in the Middle East.

But the Palestinians are playing their cute little games. They want to establish a lot of preconditions, they want to make excuses not to sit and talk with Israel, and they think they can impose this at the U.N. and impose statehood without face-to-face negotiations.

So I say "no" to excuses, "no" to 1967 lines, "no" to all kinds of preconditions before Palestinians will even sit down and talk.

The only way, if the Palestinians are truly wanting peace, they have a willing partner in Israel. As Prime Minister Netanyahu said, There is no Palestinian state not because we don't

support one; it's because the Palestinians won't recognize the Jewish State.

So I believe in two states side by side: a Jewish State of Israel and an Arab-Palestinian state. And, again, that can only happen with face-to-face negotiations. No preconditions. Let the parties sit down and talk.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I am pleased to yield 1½ minutes to the gentleman from Texas, a former member of the Foreign Affairs Committee, Mr. GREEN.

Mr. GENE GREEN of Texas. I thank my colleague, the ranking member on the Foreign Affairs Committee, for allowing me to speak.

I rise in strong support of H. Res. 268, a resolution reaffirming our Nation's commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As cochair of the Democratic Israel Working Group, I would like to thank my colleagues, both Republican Leader ERIC CANTOR and our Democratic Whip STENY HOYER, for bringing this important bipartisan resolution to the floor.

I have been to Israel and the West Bank on numerous occasions. I can personally vouch for the desire of the people of Israel and the Palestinian territories to come to a peaceful settlement that will end decades of discord and violence.

A negotiated two-state settlement between the Israelis and Palestinians is the keystone of the peace process. It is the official policy of the U.S. government, the Israeli government, and, until recently, the Palestinian Authority.

Only through direct negotiations can difficult compromises be reached on core issues like borders, water, refugees, the status of Jerusalem, and security. Attempts to bypass direct negotiations and seek recognition of a unilaterally declared Palestinian state by the U.N. General Assembly will not help the Palestinian people. Instead, such a declaration will undermine the peace process and endanger the security and well-being of the very people it claims to support.

□ 1810

A unilaterally declared Palestinian state will lead to a greater height in tensions, turn the region into a powder keg, and invite terrorist groups such as Hamas and Hezbollah to take advantage. I urge my colleagues to support this resolution.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 1½ minutes to a member of the committee, the ranking member of the Oversight Committee, the gentleman from Missouri (Mr. CARNAHAN).

Mr. CARNAHAN. Madam Speaker, I rise to support H. Res. 268 and call upon my colleagues to strongly support this resolution.

It reaffirms the long-held U.S. commitment to Israel and the negotiated settlement by and between the Israelis

and Palestinians. The future of Israel is inextricably linked to that of its neighbors in the Middle East and North Africa. With gas prices rising, conflicts in that region have a direct impact on Americans here at home.

I have long supported a two-state solution to the conflict, with Israel as the recognized home of the Jewish people and a strong Palestinian state to promote the well-being of the Palestinians as well.

The U.S. and our allies must support this process. We must allow the two parties to come together and negotiate a settlement. This is the best avenue to achieve a lasting peace. I want to say that I strongly oppose Palestinian attempts for unilateral recognition through the U.N. that would delegitimize this peace process.

A fellow Missourian, Harry Truman, recognized Israel within minutes of its declaration of independence. We must continue this kind of support for Israel and for our allies striving for peace together. I urge support of this resolution and look forward to working with my colleagues on both sides of the aisle on this issue in the months ahead.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield 2½ minutes to the gentleman from Virginia (Mr. MORAN).

Mr. MORAN. I thank my very good friend from California for yielding me the time.

Madam Speaker, the Middle East peace process is at risk of collapse, and I believe that only American leadership can save it. Both sides can and should do more to restart negotiations.

House Resolution 268, despite the fact that it has virtually unanimous support from this body and includes a laudable reaffirmation of the United States' commitment to a negotiated solution to the conflict, in fact falls short of the kind of leadership that I believe is needed. This resolution chastises the Palestinians for seeking to bridge the divide in their own community and for pursuing recognition of their state at the United Nations.

On the first point, I think we should give the Palestinian Authority, which has done an impressive job of developing institutions and its economy in the West Bank, some credit. They have tried to provide the leadership to pursue the goals that we have encouraged them to do; and they have, I think, done so in terms of developing democratic institutions in a way that we should be proud of because we had a role in that, a major role.

There is no indication they have any inclination to allow Hamas to jeopardize those gains that have been achieved in the West Bank. And thus far the reconciliation agreement between Hamas and Fatah has yet to yield any progress on a unity government. In fact, at this point it is unclear that it really will. So in many ways, the purpose for bringing forth this resolution is moot.

Should Hamas be invited to join a Palestinian unity government without accepting the conditions of The Quartet, the European Union, the United Nations, United States, Russia, those are the internationally designated bodies that have come forward with an agreement we have agreed to, if they invite Hamas to join a coalition government without accepting the conditions that we insist upon, it will have very serious implications for our relationship. And that should be the reason why we should cut off financial aid.

In 2006, Palestinian elections, which in fact were advanced by the Bush administration, are what brought Hamas into power. In reaction, the United States, as well as The International Quartet, suspended assistance to the Palestinian Authority. And the Obama administration is continuing that policy. There is no aid going to Gaza.

We need to recognize that Palestinian unity is crucial to a long-term peace. Gaza's separation from the West Bank, though, has made it impossible to advance meaningful negotiations with Israel.

Madam Speaker, there is insufficient time to lay out the other argument.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The time of the gentleman has expired.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield the gentleman an additional 15 seconds.

Mr. MORAN. Madam Speaker, there is insufficient time to lay out the other side to what has been presented. I don't particularly have strong disagreement with many of the points that have been made, but I do think there is another perspective to this. It ought to be advanced in this body.

I thank my good friend for yielding me the time.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. I continue to reserve the balance of my time.

Mr. BERMAN. Madam Speaker, I yield myself the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The gentleman is recognized for 45 seconds.

Mr. BERMAN. There are two important issues raised by this one resolution. One seems a little more distant than it did at the time it was introduced, and that was the possibility of a unity government that included an organization that is on our terrorist list, that subscribes to violence, to the elimination of the State of Israel, and refuses to recognize past agreements in a unity government. Hopefully, that agreement, the chances of it are diminishing.

The second point is a strategy which violates the Palestinians' own commitments that they made in Madrid, that they made part of the roadmap, that were made in the context of the Oslo agreements that they will negotiate directly with the Israelis to resolve this conflict. I think it is all appropriate to point out that should they pursue that course, the assistance that we have very generously given them, that they have put to good use, might well be terminated.

I urge an "aye" vote on this resolution.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield such time as he may consume to the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. BURTON), who is also the chairman of the Subcommittee on Europe and Eurasia in our Committee on Foreign Affairs.

Mr. BURTON of Indiana. I thank my chairman for yielding.

Israel's right to exist, Madam Speaker, should be guaranteed. And Israel has tried to work out over the years a peace agreement with the Palestinians so that there could be a two-state solution. In fact, twice, once during the term of Prime Minister Barak and again during the term of Prime Minister Olmert, Israel offered the Palestinians a very generous and fair final settlement. Both times those offers were flatly rejected and met with violence.

And what have the Palestinian Authority and the Palestinians done recently? They went and signed an agreement with Hamas. Hamas is a terrorist organization that has been lobbing bombs and missiles into Israel, trying to destroy the Israeli state. They are committed to the destruction of Israel. And the Palestinians have signed an agreement on May 4 of this year to work with them.

Israel went that extra step when they allowed Gaza to be turned open. And what happened right after that took place? Hamas came in there and took over and started attacking Israel day after day. Innocent women and children were running constantly from bombs being dropped on them because Gaza had been set in a position where they could open up to Hamas.

And so you have got a constant demand by the terrorists—Hamas, Hezbollah and others—to destroy the State of Israel. And Israel has been a great ally of the United States since its inception in 1948.

□ 1820

We need to send a very strong signal—I think we are doing it right now today—a very strong signal that this country, this Congress, and the Senate supports the State of Israel and does not want the Palestinians to go to the United Nations and try to have a unilateral settlement made by that body. This is something that has to be worked out at the conference table between Israel and the Palestinians and not at the United Nations.

So I would just like to conclude by saying that Israel is our best friend and ally in the Middle East. They are a stable element in the Middle East. We need to support them and make absolutely sure that Hamas, Hezbollah, and the other terrorist organizations do not have their way and destroy the State of Israel.

We are committed to that, this Congress is committed to that, and this whole debate has shown very clearly that almost unanimously the people of the United States stand with Israel.

Ms. BERKLEY. Madam Speaker, I rise today in support of H. Res. 268, reaffirming the United States' commitment to a negotiated settlement of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict through direct Israeli-Palestinian negotiations.

We all know that the only way to achieve a true and lasting peace between Israel and the Palestinians is through direct negotiations between the parties. But the Palestinians have been refusing to negotiate with Israel for over a year, using excuse after excuse to stay away from the bargaining table. The Israelis, meanwhile, have accepted the principle of a two-state solution and have pushed for immediate, direct negotiations with the Palestinians.

If I were the Palestinian leadership, which claims simply to want an independent state, I would be clamoring for immediate, direct negotiations. Nothing could stop me from sitting down at the negotiating table and finding a lasting settlement to these issues so that my people could finally achieve statehood.

But while Israel waits for a partner at the bargaining table, the Palestinians have turned away and instead asked that the United Nations prematurely recognize a Palestinian state, though its borders have not been determined, the status of Jerusalem has not been settled and the Palestinians still insist on an unprecedented "right of return" for refugees. Further, Israel still faces real threats to its security in the form of terror attacks: between April and July of this year alone, Israel was on the receiving end of hundreds of missiles fired from Gaza. The Palestinians' end-run around the negotiations is just another attempt by the Palestinians to gain the upper hand and embarrass Israel rather than finding a peaceful solution to this tragic conflict.

Complicating matters further is the agreement signed between Fatah and Hamas, a terrorist organization, to form a unity government within the Palestinian Authority. Israel cannot be expected to negotiate with terrorists, and no one should ask them to do so. And yet, PA president Mahmoud Abbas decided to cast his lot not with the moderates but with the extremists and terrorists who seek Israel's destruction, rather than a peaceful solution to the conflict.

The United Nations and the world community must reject Hamas as a legitimate representative of the Palestinians and must turn back any Palestinian attempts to avoid the negotiating table. We must insist on immediate, direct negotiations as the only path to peace. I therefore urge strong support for this resolution.

Mr. PRICE of North Carolina. Madam Speaker, I do not intend to oppose this measure because I agree with its basic premise: that the United States Congress strongly supports a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and opposes any action that will make such an outcome harder to achieve.

However, I have serious reservations about several of the assertions this resolution makes—as well as those it doesn't make—about recent developments in, and U.S. policy toward, Israel and the Palestinian territories. These concerns are more than abstract: at a time of generational change in the Middle East, the positions that this Congress takes on an issue of such vital importance will have lasting implications for our nation's goals and interests in the region.

For two decades, irrespective of which party has controlled the White House or Congress,

the central aim of U.S. policy toward the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has been to encourage a negotiated resolution based on the principle of a democratic, Jewish state of Israel living side by side in peace and security with a viable, democratic Palestinian state. Republican and Democratic presidents alike have affirmed that such an outcome will only be achieved through direct negotiations between the two parties, and have opposed any action by either side that undermines or diminishes the prospects for a negotiated peace.

To be sure, the Palestinian leadership's intent to pursue diplomatic recognition at the United Nations qualifies as such an action, and on this point I agree with the sponsors of this resolution. I also share their concerns about the prospect of a Palestinian unity government that does not recognize Israel's right to exist or renounce violence against innocent civilians. Either development would represent a major setback for the peace process as we know it, and Congress is right to warn Palestinian leaders about the consequences of their course of action.

But as usual, the resolution before us today tells only half the story. It says nothing about Israel's responsibility to act as a serious negotiating partner and abide by its previous commitments under the Road Map and other agreements. It says nothing about Israel's refusal to halt settlement construction in order to allow direct negotiations to resume—even when the Obama Administration offered a lavish package of aid and assurances for Israel to do something that was manifestly in its own interest to begin with. It condemns the Palestinian president for his unilateral actions while failing to comprehend that it has been Israel's intransigence that has led him to view the United Nations as his only recourse. And as usual, the resolution has been rushed to the floor without any serious debate or any opportunity for input from the many members of this body who care about this critical issue.

This resolution is also being considered at a pivotal moment in the history of the peace process, as well as the history of the broader Middle East. After years of false starts and broken promises, the prospects for a negotiated peace appear as dim today as at any time in recent memory, and may grow dimmer still as the political winds in the Arab world shift in unpredictable ways. Now, perhaps more than ever before, strong and decisive U.S. leadership is needed to persuade both sides of the urgency of the moment and bring them back to the negotiating table. It is only a matter of time before there is no table left around which to negotiate.

Yet instead of urging the President to redouble his commitment to the pursuit of peace, we are urging him to lead a diplomatic initiative to oppose Palestinian recognition. Instead of encouraging him to bring the full weight of American ideas, influence, and resources to bear on this critical issue, we are asking him to suspend U.S. assistance to the Palestinian Authority—the very assistance that has been so essential to laying the foundations for a future Palestinian state. Instead of congratulating him for his efforts to revive the stalled negotiations by outlining his ideas for the boundaries of a future Palestinian state, too many of my colleagues seem more interested in manufacturing a controversy for political gain. Unfortunately, the current Israeli prime minister seems all too willing to play along,

despite the fact that the two previous U.S. presidents—not to mention at least two former Israeli prime ministers—have advocated positions nearly identical to that outlined by President Obama.

So while I will cast my vote in favor of H. Res. 28, I am reminded of the story of Nero playing the fiddle as Rome burns. The Middle East is transforming before our eyes, and the window of opportunity for the United States to achieve a just and lasting resolution to this age-old conflict may be closing rapidly. We should seize this moment of opportunity and recommit ourselves to the pursuit of peace before it is too late.

Mr. PAUL. Madam Speaker, I rise in opposition to this resolution. While I certainly share the hope for peace in the Middle East and a solution to the ongoing conflict, I do not believe that peace will result if we continue to do the same things while hoping for different results. The U.S. has been involved in this process for decades, spending billions of dollars we do not have, yet we never seem to get much closer to a solution. I believe the best solution is to embrace non-interventionism, which allows those most directly involved to solve their own problems.

This resolution not only further entangles the U.S. in the Israeli/Palestinian dispute, but it sets out the kind of outcome the United States would accept in advance. While I prefer our disengagement from that conflict, I must wonder how the U.S. expects to be seen as an "honest broker" when it dictates the term of a solution in such a transparently one-sided manner. In the resolution before us, all demands are made of only one side in the conflict. Do supporters of this resolution really believe the actors in the Middle East and the rest of the world do not notice? We do no favors to the Israelis or to the Palestinians when we involve ourselves in such a manner and block any negotiations that may take place without U.S. participation. They have the incentives to find a way to live in peace and we must allow them to find that solution on their own. As always, congressional attitudes toward the peace process in the Middle East reveal hubris and self-importance. Only those who must live together in the Middle East can craft a lasting peace between Israel and Palestine.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I yield back the balance of my time.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. The question is on the motion offered by the gentlewoman from Florida (Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN) that the House suspend the rules and agree to the resolution, H. Res. 268.

The question was taken.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. In the opinion of the Chair, two-thirds being in the affirmative, the ayes have it.

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, on that I demand the yeas and nays.

The yeas and nays were ordered.

The SPEAKER pro tempore. Pursuant to clause 8 of rule XX and the Chair's prior announcement, further proceedings on this motion will be postponed.

BELARUS DEMOCRACY AND HUMAN RIGHTS ACT OF 2011

Ms. ROS-LEHTINEN. Madam Speaker, I move to suspend the rules and

pass the bill (H.R. 515) to reauthorize the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004, as amended.

The Clerk read the title of the bill.

The text of the bill is as follows:

H.R. 515

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the "Belarus Democracy and Human Rights Act of 2011".

SEC. 2. FINDINGS; STATEMENT OF POLICY.

Sections 2 and 3 of the Belarus Democracy Act of 2004 (Public Law 109-480; 22 U.S.C. 5811 note) is amended to read as follows:

"SEC. 2. FINDINGS.

"Congress finds the following:

"(1) The Government of Belarus has engaged in a pattern of clear and uncorrected violations of human rights and fundamental freedoms.

"(2) The Government of Belarus has engaged in a pattern of clear and uncorrected violations of basic principles of democratic governance, including through a series of fundamentally flawed presidential and parliamentary elections undermining the legitimacy of executive and legislative authority in that country.

"(3) The Government of Belarus has subjected thousands of pro-democratic political activists to harassment, beatings, and jailings, particularly as a result of their attempts to peacefully exercise their right to freedom of assembly and association.

"(4) The Government of Belarus has attempted to maintain a monopoly over the country's information space, targeting independent media, including independent journalists, for systematic reprisals and elimination, while suppressing the right to freedom of speech and expression of those dissenting from the dictatorship of Aleksandr Lukashenka, and adopted laws restricting the media, including the Internet, in a manner inconsistent with international human rights agreements.

"(5) The Government of Belarus continues a systematic campaign of harassment, repression, and closure of nongovernmental organizations, including independent trade unions and entrepreneurs, and this crackdown has created a climate of fear that inhibits the development of civil society and social solidarity.

"(6) The Government of Belarus has subjected leaders and members of select ethnic and religious minorities to harassment, including the imposition of heavy fines and denying permission to meet for religious services, sometimes by selective enforcement of the 2002 Belarus religion law.

"(7) The Government of Belarus has attempted to silence dissent by persecuting human rights and pro-democracy activists with threats, firings, expulsions, beatings and other forms of intimidation, and restrictions on freedom of movement and prohibition of international travel.

"(8) The dictator of Belarus, Aleksandr Lukashenka, established himself in power by orchestrating an illegal and unconstitutional referendum that enabled him to impose a new constitution, abolishing the duly elected parliament, the 13th Supreme Soviet, installing a largely powerless National Assembly, extending his term in office, and removing applicable term limits.

"(9) The Government of Belarus has failed to make a convincing effort to solve the cases of disappeared opposition figures Yuri Zakharenka, Viktor Gonchar, and Anatoly Krasovsky and journalist Dmitry Zavadsky, even though credible allegations and evidence links top officials of the Government to these disappearance.