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INSTITUTE FOR PUBLIC AFFAIRS

March 14, 2008

Chairman Gary Ackerman
House Subcommittee on Middle East & South Asia
Committee on Foreign Affairs
Washington, DC 20515
By Fax & Electronic Mail
Attn: Howard Diamond

Dear Chairman Ackerman:

I write to you on behalf of the Union of Orthodox Jewish Congregations of America – the nation's largest Orthodox Jewish umbrella organization, with regard to your statement at the March 12th hearing at the House Subcommittee on the Middle East and South Asia titled "853 Days: From Gaza Disengagement to De Facto Power?"

I applaud your holding this hearing which reflects your continued leadership efforts in matters of peace and security in the Middle East. Additionally, I was impressed by your tough questions to the Assistant Secretary of State, including an inquiry as to when the Administration will choose a strategy for either reviving the Palestinian Authority (PA) or moving on without it. This was followed by your recognition that there is no current PA entity that can reasonably control the borders of Gaza or stop the smuggling of weapons into Gaza. The inclusion of these comments and questions are fundamental to understanding and explaining that the PA remains impotent at best, or corrupt at worst.

At the same time, I remain puzzled by another message that you advanced in your opening statement. For example, when discussing the Israeli leadership, you noted that they "welcome and celebrate moderate Palestinian leaders" but you also criticize Israeli security operations which have "made a mockery of nascent Palestinian efforts to put just a little authority back in the Palestinian Authority." It would seem from this statement that you expect Israel to choose half-hearted PA assertions of security to the practical defense of its citizens.

What is even more difficult to understand is your concluding statement which asked "When do we see real changes, real sacrifices, real political pain? I'm not seeing any of these things from any of the parties and I'm starting to suspect that I'm not going to." Would you not agree that Israel has demonstrated its readiness to sacrifice for peace time and again only to be met time and again by terrorism and incitement? Would you not agree that Israel has responded with moral restraint to rockets into its town and machineguns in its Yeshivot yet received international condemnation? Your statements beg clarification and I would urge you to elaborate upon your views.

Once again, we appreciate your leadership and I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Nathan Diament". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name being more prominent.

Nathan Diament