

Letter to Illinois Congressional Representatives December, 2009

As leaders of faith communities in metropolitan Chicago, we are deeply concerned about the passage in early November of H. Res. 867 that opposed “unequivocally any endorsement *or further consideration* of the Report of the United Nations Fact Finding Mission on the Gaza Conflict”. All nineteen Illinois House members either co-sponsored or voted in favor of this Resolution. And not one Illinois Representative challenged either its wording or the manner in which it was considered by the Committee on Foreign Affairs and hastily voted on by the House of Representatives. We expected a higher level of diligent deliberation when dealing with an international issue of such magnitude.

Our concern grows out of moral principles lying at the heart of each of our Abrahamic faiths regarding the dignity of every human being who is created in the image of God and our responsibility to demand impartial justice for those without power. We believe these principles as well as international law were violated before, during, and after the Gaza conflict.

So far as we can determine,

- there was little, if any, discussion of the resolution in the Committee on Foreign Affairs to which it was referred;
- there were no hearings held on the resolution, thus depriving the House and the public of the opportunity to become better informed on issues raised by and surrounding this Report;
- at the time of the vote few Representatives had even read the executive summary of the Report;
- the Resolution was hastily presented and voted upon without adequate study, consideration, discussion and debate.

By failing to call for independent investigations, by condemning the Report and by attacking Justice Richard Goldstone, a respected, experienced and highly credible international jurist, Congress contributed to the perception throughout the Muslim and Arab world that the United States is unconcerned about the human rights and the rightful claims of Palestinians. With the passage of H. Res. 867 Congress contributed to a loss of hope among Palestinians, an Israel that is less, not more secure, and an increased probability of violence in the region.

We believe there is sufficient evidence in the Report’s findings of violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law by Hamas and Israel that the United States has a political as well as a moral obligation to call for independent investigations by both Hamas and Israel to determine the truth of these allegations. Specifically, we ask that you:

- Make available a public statement on your rationale for co-sponsoring and/or voting for H. Res. 867.
- Craft and seek co-sponsors to a resolution that calls for independent investigations into the conduct of Palestinian militants and the Israeli military before, during and after the military operations in Gaza from 27 December, 2008, through 18 January, 2009.

Sincerely,

This letter reflects the opinions of the individual signatories. Institutions are listed for identification purposes only.