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Healthcare for All, Panetta

Just three days after October 7th, I was a part of the first congressional delegation to go into Israel to demonstrate our concern and condolences after the horrific attack by Hamas. Just over four months later, it was imperative to return to the region to express our sustained support for Israel and our allies, as well as put pressure on them to continue their negotiations for a quick and peaceful resolution to this very complex and difficult conflict.

Our bipartisan and bicameral congressional delegation met with the leaders of Egypt, Israel, Qatar, and Bahrain as we pressed for the release of hostages and the potential for another truce. We stressed the importance of balancing Israel's security interests with the need to protect Gazan civilians. We advocated for pinpoint and targeted operations as Israel defends itself by removing Hamas leadership and an increase of humanitarian aid in Gaza. And finally, we discussed ways in which we can find a clear pathway for long term stability and peace in the region, including a two-state solution. We also met with recently released hostages, families of hostages currently being held in Gaza, and victims of the attack. We went to kibbutz Nir Oz, which is located less than a mile from Gaza, and saw the horrific damage.

As negotiations continue for another truce, the United States continues to act diplomatically to ensure peaceful Palestinian civilians are protected. That is why we continue to be a driver of the negotiations for the parameters of peace. Further, the U.S. has issued sanctions against settlers in the West Bank who commit acts of violence, bolstered our existing laws on the transfer of military aid by mandating a written certification of compliance with humanitarian and international laws, and prevented Palestinians in the U.S. from being deported for the next 18 months, which provides Palestinians a temporary safe haven in the United States.

By actually taking the time to visit the region twice since October of last year, meet with leaders in the region, victims of the war, and concerned constituents in the district, and by attending numerous briefings and meetings about the conflict, casualties, and the Middle East, I believe that I have worked hard to develop somewhat of an understanding of the deep, difficult, and complex nature of the war, that is more thorough and meaningful than one word or a one-page resolution. That is why the United States has and must continue to advocate for a quick and peaceful resolution to the conflict, the release of all hostages by Hamas, the rights and support of Israel to defend itself with the responsibility to act accordance with humanitarian and international laws, the minimization of civilian casualties, the increase of humanitarian aid, the diplomatic involvement of regional nations for an outcome, and a pathway towards a two-state solution.

As my constituents have experienced throughout my limited time as their United States Representative, I act, rather than solely act outraged. That is why I have been to the region numerous times and can sit down and have the necessary, credible, and tough conversations with the leaders of those countries. Although they were very emotional trips, they also were very impactful as part of my continued effort to listen, learn, support, and work for peace and prosperity in the Middle East.