

By Congressman David Price -

On November 3, 2009, the House of Representatives debated H. Res. 867, a resolution condemning a United Nations-supported investigation into potential abuses committed by Israeli and Palestinian forces during the January 2009 conflict in Gaza. Specifically, the resolution criticized the so-called "Goldstone report" report as biased against Israel and called on the President and Secretary of State to "oppose unequivocally any endorsement or further consideration" of its findings. Rep. Price acknowledged that the debate over the report had been one-sided but felt that H. Res. 867 unfairly criticized the author of the report and contained numerous factual inaccuracies. He also believed that the resolution could result in a lack of accountability for abuses committed by both parties to the conflict, a concern shared by various U.S. and Israeli officials and human rights organizations.

His remarks on the resolution, as delivered on the floor of the House, follow:

"Madam Speaker, let's be clear about what we're debating here:

Nobody in this Chamber disputes Israel's right to defend itself against attacks by Hamas and other terrorist organizations, and neither does the report issued by Justice Goldstone. The report instead examines the conduct of the war by both sides, including a detailed chapter on the savage rocket attacks launched from Gaza into southern Israel, which it describes as serious war crimes and possibly crimes against humanity.

Nobody here is defending one-sided mandates, either, but in the interest of full disclosure, critics should note that Justice Goldstone insisted on a rewritten and balanced mandate before he took on the assignment.

Nobody here is disputing the obligation of the United States to insist that any resolution debated by the United Nations be fair and balanced and to vote against or veto it otherwise.

However, there is a crucial distinction between criticizing the way in which the Goldstone Report was handled at the U.N. and criticizing the very existence of the report in the first place – which is exactly what this resolution does. Conflating the two does a disservice to a respected jurist who has devoted his life to upholding international norms of justice and human rights, and more importantly, it may damage future efforts to hold countries accountable through international investigations.

Finally, bringing this resolution up at this time and in this manner could have implications for the possibility of internal investigations into the conflict by the parties themselves. That is a central recommendation of the Goldstone Report as well as the Obama administration, prominent Israeli officials and Israeli human rights organizations.

Israel is a strong and resilient democracy, and successfully investigating this episode could only make it stronger. We shouldn't pass a resolution now which could slow or stop the wheels of justice before they have even begun to turn."

[Goldstone Letter to Sponsors of H.Res. 867](#)