

## **Current Israel Talking Points**

**June 11, 2010**

- We are deeply saddened by the loss of life and grievous injuries that resulted from the flotilla interdiction.
- What is particularly disconcerting is that this outcome could have been easily avoided. Those leading the flotilla should have agreed to dock at the Port of Ashdod to allow Israeli officials to examine the cargo onboard. All legitimate humanitarian items would have been forwarded into Gaza without incident.
- However, it is clear that the purpose of the flotilla, organized by groups associated with Al Qaeda and other terrorist organizations, was not essentially humanitarian, but rather it was to undermine Israel's blockade.
- The purpose of the Israeli blockade, which is legal under international law, is to prevent rearmament of Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization backed by Iran, which openly seeks Israel's destruction and over the years has launched thousands of rockets into Israeli cities.
- In addition to its terrorist activity, Hamas has been holding Israeli soldier Gilad Shalit hostage for almost four years and, contrary to the Geneva Conventions, denies all access to him.
- While Israel's fundamental right of self-defense must be respected, questions have been raised about the execution of the interdiction. The highly respected Maj. Gen. (Res.) Giora Eiland has been appointed to head a team of experts, including foreign observers, jurists and former diplomats, to explore the flotilla operation and to derive lessons from it.
- Conditions in the Gaza Strip are difficult, no doubt, and this is due to the fact it is controlled by a terrorist organization with which much of the world does not want to engage. But there is no humanitarian crisis or starvation as some suggest.
- Israel, along with Egypt, which also controls Gaza's borders, and the international community are looking for ways to improve the humanitarian conditions without strengthening Hamas' ability to wage terror against Israeli civilians.
- Ultimately, only an agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, which leads to a broader Middle East peace, is the long term solution to this sad situation. Unlike the Palestinian Authority in the West Bank, which accepts the two state formula and has brought about a dramatic improvement in the economy and security there, Hamas rejects such an outcome and works tirelessly to undermine peace efforts.
- We support the efforts of the United States to advance the peace process and to encourage the parties to engage in direct negotiations over the issues that divide them.
- We also support the efforts of the international community to deprive Iran of nuclear weapons capability, a development that would make peacemaking in the Middle East much more complicated.