

International Affairs & Foreign Policy

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The Arab-Israeli Conflict

U.S. relations in the Middle East are in a constant state of flux. Americans understand more than ever the urgency of relieving tensions in the region, dismantling existing terrorist networks, and bringing about peace. In this effort the partnership between the U.S. and Israel is indispensable. Rep. Eshoo has consistently supported the relationship between the two democracies and has been a steady supporter of aid to Israel. Continued U.S. aid to Israel is critical and sends the clearest message that we stand with her.

Since coming to Congress, Rep. Eshoo has visited Israel and the Middle East several times, most recently in March of 2005. Following that trip she reported a renewed sense of hope in the region that wasn't felt in previous visits. Events since then, including the Summer 2006 armed conflicts, have dramatically altered the landscape in the Middle East in ways that are not yet fully understood. Despite the uncertainty, reasons to be hopeful remain.

Hamas's success in the January 2006 Palestinian parliamentary elections were an alarming development. Hamas is an organization elected in the freest and fairest election the Arab world has ever seen, but one that is listed as a terrorist group all over the world. In the run-up to the Palestinian election, Rep. Eshoo voiced her concern about Hamas's potential for success among several of her colleagues in Congress, and she voted in favor of House Resolution 575, legislation asserting that terrorist organizations, such as Hamas, should not participate in Palestinian elections until such organizations recognize Israel's right to exist as a Jewish state, cease incitement of violence, condemn terrorism, and disarm and dismantle their terrorist infrastructure. Hamas has yet to take these necessary steps, and until they do, U.S. foreign policy toward the Palestinian people is going to be greatly imperiled.

It has since become clear that Hamas's success was in large part a result of deep-seeded frustration within the Palestinian people for the years of incompetence, short-sightedness, and outright corruption on the part of the Fatah party. It's a lesson that elected officials should take to heart the world over, and one area where U.S. foreign policy can, and should, be more effective.

Despite the recent uncertainty, the fact remains that the level of violence has substantially declined over the years. Some of the major players have changed recently, but overall the desire for a fresh start and an end to the conflict still prevails in the region.

Iran

Iran remains a dangerous actor in the Middle East, and Rep. Eshoo has been firm in her belief that more needs to be done to keep the repressive and dangerous Iranian regime from obtaining nuclear weapons of mass destruction, as well as force them to halt their support of terrorism by exerting outside pressure to promote democratic reform without military intervention.

In the 109th Congress, Rep. Eshoo cosponsored H.R. 282, the Iran Freedom Support Act, which passed the House in April 2006 by an overwhelming vote of 397-21. Under the Iran Freedom Support Act, U.S. sanctions imposed on the Iranian regime would be strengthened in certain areas until and unless Iran curtails its sponsorship of international terrorism and abandons its nuclear program. The bill also provides assistance to pro-democracy forces and groups in Iran, and funds independent media broadcasts into Iran.

Rep. Eshoo has long been an outspoken opponent of preemptive and unilateral military intervention, however, she is vocal in insisting renegade regimes in the Middle East cease their support for terrorism and their efforts to further destabilize the region. Only a broad international diplomatic push will accomplish these objectives, and the U.S. must remain a committed leader in this effort.

To underscore this commitment, Rep. Eshoo is a cosponsor of H.R. 1400, the Iran Counter-Proliferation Act of 2007. H.R. 1400 specifically states that the President does not have the authority to attack Iran without seeking Congressional approval. The legislation also establishes and strengthens additional U.S. sanctions on the Iranian regime for its sponsorship and support of international terrorism. H.R. 1400 also restricts our nuclear cooperation with countries that assist Iran's nuclear program.

Progress is being made in bringing international pressure to bear against Iran's dangerous nuclear ambitions. In an encouraging show of global unity, the U.S. Security Council in February 2006 called upon Iran to suspend its nuclear program and implement transparency measures to allow the international community to inspect its facilities. Because the Iranian government has continually failed to heed these warnings, the U.N. imposed sanctions on Iran in December 2006.

U.S.-Iran relations have been strained since the current Iranian regime came to power nearly 30 years ago. Nonetheless, the people of Iran and the United States share a common interest in mutual security and Rep. Eshoo has been a consistent voice in favor of non-military intervention to promote stability and democratization in Iran.

Darfur

Sudan, geographically the largest country in Africa, has been ravaged by intermittent civil war for over four decades. An estimated 2 million people have died over the last 20 years due to war-related causes and famine, and millions more have been displaced from their homes. Since February 2003, a dispute over territorial issues and the reigning government's desire to implement Islamic law in the Darfur region have escalated into a humanitarian crisis. Over the last four years an estimated 2.5 million people have been displaced and nearly 70% of Darfur's villages have been razed. While there are no reliable estimates of the number of people killed as a result of the conflict, it's thought to be over 450,000.

Rep. Eshoo has been at the forefront of efforts in Congress to pass legislation that condemns the atrocities in Darfur, appropriately labels them "genocide," and stops those perpetuating the violence.

In the 110th Congress, Rep. Eshoo cosponsored and voted for H.R. 180, the Darfur Accountability and Divestment Act of 2007, which passed the House on July 31st by a vote of 418 to 1. The legislation supports a wide range of state, city and university-based efforts to restrict investment in U.S. companies that choose to conduct business operations in Sudan, with the exception of businesses that are providing humanitarian assistance to the people of Darfur. The bill also prohibits the U.S. government from awarding contracts to companies that continue to work with the Sudanese government for profit.

In the 109th Congress, Rep. Eshoo cosponsored and voted for H.R. 3127, the Darfur Peace and Accountability Act, which passed the House by a vote of 416-3 in April 2006 and was enacted into law on October 13, 2006. The legislation directs the President to seize the assets of and refuse future visas to any individual (or their family members) responsible for acts of genocide, war crimes, or crimes against humanity in Sudan. It also forbids any U.S. port from accepting any goods or cargo from Sudanese ships should the Sudanese Government fail to take steps to resolve the crisis. H.R. 3127 authorizes the President to provide assistance to reinforce the deployment and operations of an expanded African Union Mission in Sudan (AMIS), and directs the President to instruct the U.S. Permanent Representative to NATO to advocate reinforcement of AMIS, upon request of the African Union.

In February 2006 Rep. Eshoo voted for the Capuano Amendment to the FY2006 Supplemental Appropriations Bill for Iraq and Other International Activities, which added \$50 million in funding for peacekeeping efforts in Sudan. Rep. Eshoo also cosponsored and voted for H. Res. 723, legislation calling on the President to advocate for the deployment of a U.N. peacekeeping force to Darfur and for NATO to implement an interim protection force for civilians on the ground.

Rep. Eshoo joined colleagues in January 2006 in writing to urge the Regents of the University of California (UC) to develop a plan to substantially divest their financial interests from the government of Sudan. As one of the world's largest public universities, UC has a huge financial endowment which includes over \$4 billion invested in foreign companies, some of which do business in Sudan. Substantially divesting from these interests will send a clear and important message that the ongoing acts of genocide must cease if the Sudanese government wishes to maintain an economic relationship with the outside world. A similar effort in the 1980's helped to bring about the end of apartheid in South Africa.

While visiting the Middle East in March 2005 as part of a high-level Congressional Delegation, Rep. Eshoo urged President Mubarak of neighboring Egypt to get more actively involved in addressing the issue. More governments in the region need to lend their support.

Too many times in the past century the world has stood by while an endangered minority was faced with extinction. It's been four years since the crisis in Darfur began; it's time for decisive action to put an end to these acts of barbarity.

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