



**HOUSE RULES AND EXECUTIVE NOMINATIONS COMMITTEE**

**MARCH 4, 2024**

**HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 2**

**SUPPORTING A LONG-TERM CEASEFIRE IN ISRAEL AND PALESTINE**

**OPPOSE**

Agudath Israel of Maryland, the Mid-Atlantic regional office for Agudath Israel of America – a renowned national Jewish advocacy organization with chapters across the country, speaks on behalf of the Orthodox Jewish communities across Maryland. Thousands of the members of our community have visited Israel, have lived in Israel, and/or have family members who live in Israel. We submit this testimony today, on their behalf, in opposition to House Joint Resolution 2.

It is extremely disheartening to note the inaccuracies and omissions of HJ0002. The resolution fails to acknowledge that blame for the current war and for the death toll lies squarely on Hamas, for its intentional sexual violence, murder, and cruelty against innocent Israelis as well as its ruthless oppression of Palestinian dissidents and peace activists and its constant hate-filled propaganda, through which it has been attempting to brainwash Gazans into eternal war for over a decade.

The resolution states (p. 2 lines 16-20) that the Israeli military's response to the shocking atrocities committed by Hamas, a group recognized by the United States and the rest of the civilized world as a foreign terrorist organization, is a violation of international law. The resolution therefore denies Israel the right to defend itself against a barbarous enemy, implying that Israel must not be allowed to destroy Hamas. At this point it should be mentioned that the International Court of Justice (ICJ) has recognized Israel's right to conduct military operations to destroy Hamas, and that such military efforts do not violate international law.<sup>1</sup>

Additionally, we are saddened to note that while the resolution condemns anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab bigotry (p. 2 lines 25-29), it fails to condemn anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist bigotry, despite the fact that anti-Israeli and anti-Zionist bigotry has risen significantly in Maryland and around the world.

The words of John Spencer, who is the chair of urban warfare studies at the Modern War Institute (MWI) at West Point, and who served two tours in Iraq, are apt: "... as someone who has served two tours in Iraq and studied urban warfare for over a decade, Israel has taken precautionary measures even the United States did not do during its recent wars in Iraq and Afghanistan. - I say this not to put Israel on a pedestal or to diminish the human suffering of Gazans but rather to correct a number of misperceptions when it comes to urban warfare. Third, one of the best ways to prevent civilian casualties in urban warfare is to provide warning and evacuate urban areas before the full combined air and ground attack commences. This tactic is unpopular for obvious reasons... The United States

<sup>1</sup> See <https://www.israelnationalnews.com/news/385337>.

did not do this ahead of its initial invasion of Iraq in 2003... did not do this before its April 2004 Battle of Fallujah. By contrast, Israel provided days and then weeks of warnings, as well as time for civilians to evacuate multiple cities in northern Gaza before starting the main air-ground attack of urban areas. The Israel Defense Forces (IDF) employed their practice of calling and texting ahead of an air strike as well as roof-knocking... **No military has ever implemented any of these practices in war before. To be clear, I am outraged by the civilian casualties in Gaza. But it's crucial to direct that outrage at the right target. And that target is Hamas.**"<sup>2</sup>

We urge you to reject the false equivalence drawn between a murderous terrorist organization and a historic US ally and to reject the attempt to deny Israel its right to self-defense, and therefore request an unfavorable report on HJ0002.

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<sup>2</sup> <https://www.newsweek.com/israel-implemented-more-measures-prevent-civilian-casualties-any-other-nation-history-opinion-1865613>. Emphasis added.