

# Democrats, Republicans line up to back Israeli war crimes

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Last week, both the US House of Representatives and Senate overwhelmingly passed resolutions praising the Bush administration for its full support of Israel's military campaign in Lebanon. Democrats joined with Republicans to endorse Israel's bombing campaign, which has led to the deaths of hundreds of civilians.

The House resolution passed by a vote of 410-8 on July 20, while the Senate passed its resolution by unanimous consent on July 18. On Sunday, leading Democrats, including Senate Foreign Relations Committee member Chris Dodd and the minority leader of the House Intelligence Committee, Jane Harman, reiterated their support for Israel's assault on Lebanon.

The congressional resolutions place full responsibility for the current violence in the Middle East on Hamas and Hezbollah. The House resolution denounces them for "engaging in unprovoked and reprehensible armed attacks against Israel." The organizations are condemned for "continuing to indiscriminately target Israeli civilian populations with their rockets and missiles."

The resolutions say nothing of the far greater civilian casualties inflicted by Israeli rockets, which have been deliberately targeted at civilian infrastructure, particularly in southern Lebanon. Instead, the resolutions repeat the pretext given by Israel for its policy of targeting civilians—that Hamas and Hezbollah are "cynically exploiting civilian populations as shields." Israel, which has killed at least 380 people in Lebanon, overwhelmingly civilian, is praised for its "longstanding commitment to minimizing civilian loss."

Particularly noteworthy is the bipartisan support for the Bush administration's efforts to heighten pressure on Syria and Iran. The House resolution "commends the President... for fully supporting Israel as it responds

to these armed attacks by terrorist organizations and their state sponsors" and "urges the President... to bring the full force of political, diplomatic, and economic sanctions available... against the governments of Syria and Iran."

Administration officials have repeated in recent days their opposition to a cease-fire on the grounds that this would keep in place an unacceptable state of affairs. The Israeli aggression against Lebanon and Gaza is part of an attempt to shift the balance of power in the Middle East, extending the domination of the US and its principal client state in the region, Israel.

In an appearance on CNN's "Late Edition with Wolf Blitzer", Harman emphasized her complete support for the Bush administration's policy. Asked by Blitzer whether she had any problems with how the administration had handled the situation so far, Harman voiced her agreement with the administration's rejection of a cease-fire. "I don't think an immediate cease-fire makes any sense," she said. "That will send a message to both terrorist organizations, Hamas and Hezbollah, that they can regroup and that they will have time to continue their terrorist activities."

Harman repeated a phrase she has used before, arguing that Israel should use the opportunity to "drain the swamp" in both Lebanon and Gaza. She also referred to the "cancer in the south of Lebanon." These racist formulations are meant to justify the wholesale slaughter of civilians on the grounds that this is necessary to undermine Hezbollah and Hamas.

Harman and the Republican chairman of the House Intelligence Committee, Peter Hoekstra, spoke to Blitzer from Jerusalem, where they met with Israeli officials to assure them of the bipartisan support of the US Congress.

Harman repeated the propaganda line she had been

fed by the Israeli government, including the claim that Israel was targeting only civilians who were hiding weapons for Hezbollah. “And what the Israelis tell us is that a number of the civilians in the south of Lebanon have been aiding and abetting Hezbollah,” she said. “Their efforts are to target only the military installations and only the capability of Hezbollah, but there is civilian damage because some of these civilians, according to the Israelis, have been cooperating and hiding these weapons.”

For his part, Dodd was slightly more critical, suggesting that Israel had gone too far in its military actions. His concern, however, was not from the standpoint of high civilian casualties or the illegal character of the Israeli attacks, but from the tactical perspective of what would best secure US and Israeli domination of the region. Dodd expressed concern that the attacks on Lebanon would radicalize the population in that country as well as that of Jordan and Egypt, destabilizing key US allies.

“If you had free elections in Jordan, Egypt and Lebanon today,” Dodd noted, “the Islamic Jihad, the Muslim Brotherhood would win overwhelmingly in those countries. That is dangerous for Israel, in my view, and the United States.”

In spite of these concerns, Dodd was quick to defend the decision by the Bush administration to expedite the shipment of hi-tech, high impact bombs to Israel. “The idea that we’re not going to support and supply Israel with what it needs to defend itself is something that I would not be supportive of,” he said. “I’m supportive of giving them what they need at this juncture.”

The virtual unanimity of the Democrats and Republicans on the Israeli assault on Lebanon underscores that both parties defend the interests of US imperialism and its attempts to establish US hegemony over the entire Middle East. The support of the Democrats for Israel is of a piece with their support for the ongoing occupation of Iraq. While there may be tactical differences on how to go about it, all sections of the American political establishment are agreed on the need for the US to dominate the region and its rich supplies of oil.

Leading Democrats have for some time sought to criticize the Bush administration’s policy on Iran from the right, arguing that not enough has been done to halt Iran’s nuclear program. If and when the Israeli attacks

on Lebanon lead to US or Israeli military action against Syria or Iran, there can be no doubt that the Democratic Party will support this as well.



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