

EXTENSIONS OF REMARKS

ISRAEL'S WITHDRAWAL FROM SOUTH LEBANON: THE OTHER SIDE OF THE STORY

HON. NICK J. RAHALL II

OF WEST VIRGINIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2000

Mr. RAHALL. Mr. Speaker, on May 25, 2000, this body unanimously adopted a resolution commending Israel for its "redeployment" from Lebanon. I voted yes, despite the extremely one-sided nature of the resolution, even down to the use of the word "redeployment," which most of the world terms as withdrawal.

Let us not forget. This is a valiant victory for the people of Lebanon who have suffered immensely both before, but more tragically since, the Israeli occupation lasting over 22 years. Now our own government can pride itself on one less U.N. Resolution which it so embarrassingly failed to enforce for more than two decades.

The following article, which appeared in the May 26, 2000 edition of the Los Angeles Times, and written by Hussein Ibish, communications director for the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC), puts into much more balance the recent House action.

[From the Los Angeles Times, May 26, 2000]

KNOW NOW THAT ARAB LIVES ARE AS WORTHY AS ISRAELIS'

(By Hussein Ibish)

As the Lebanese people have finally liberated themselves from more than two decades of Israeli occupation, most American commentators are reacting with only one concern: Will northern Israel be safe from attack?

The focus on this misleading question is the result of a widespread acceptance of the official Israeli line that its 22-year rampage in southern Lebanon was in essence a futile quest for peace in a hostile region. This view is consistent with the pattern of putting Israeli lives and concerns over those of Arabs, but it is completely inconsistent with the history of the occupation and the experiences of its Lebanese victims.

It is blind to the tens of thousands of Lebanese civilians killed by Israel during the occupation, the hundreds of thousands made homeless and the scores of destroyed villages and cities. It forgets the ghastly massacres of unarmed civilians for which the Israelis have been responsible in Lebanon, including the massacres at the Sabra and Shatila refugee camps and the U.N. base at Qana. It ignores the Lebanese civilians held hostage to this day in Israeli prisons and the hundreds of Lebanese men, women and children held prisoner and tortured at the notorious Khiam detention center run by the Israeli-controlled militia, the South Lebanese Army. It does not acknowledge the pain of the Lebanese nation at being divided for almost a quarter of a century and subject to continuous attacks on its civilian population and infrastructure.

No wonder, given this history, that the scenes of liberation from south Lebanon have been truly extraordinary. Hundreds of

Lebanese streamed back into villages and towns from which they had been expelled by Israel. Tears of joy flowed as relatives were reunited after years of separation. Hundreds of civilians stormed Khiam, freeing about 140 prisoners and exposing the hideous apparatus of torture and terror employed there.

These scenes have potentially far-reaching implications. Can others in the Middle East living under foreign military occupation, such as the Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, have failed to register what real liberation looks like?

Everywhere Hezbollah fighters, derided by the Israeli and U.S. governments as "terrorists," conducted themselves in an exemplary manner, handing prisoners over to government troops and ensuring that the liberation was not marred by acts of vengeance. These supposed fanatical terrorists were once again shown to be a disciplined and responsible liberation force.

How quickly it is forgotten that Hezbollah is itself a product of the Israeli occupation, founded in 1982 with the aim of driving out the Israeli army and freeing the south of the hellish experience of occupation. The fretting about potential Hezbollah rocket attacks on northern Israeli towns is misplaced, given that since 1996 Hezbollah has almost always carried out such attacks in response to Israeli killings of Lebanese civilians, often only after repeated atrocities. By contrast, in recent months Israel repeatedly attacked Lebanese civilian targets, such as power stations, in response to attacks on its soldiers in Lebanon.

The Israeli army may have fled Lebanon in chaos and humiliation, but not without issuing dire threats of massive attacks against Lebanon. Israel's retreat from Lebanon is incomplete and insufficient. Israel was driven out of most of southern Lebanon by an extraordinary campaign of popular resistance, but continues to occupy the Shabaa Farms area. It holds numerous Lebanese hostage.

There is every indication that Israel still feels it can attack the Lebanese people with impunity. Israel's foreign minister, David Levy, recently threatened that Israel would continue to target Lebanese civilians "blood for blood, child for child."

The international community, while paying lip service to Lebanese territorial integrity, failed to exert any pressure on Israel to end its occupation. Instead it was left to resistance groups such as Hezbollah to enforce U.N. Security Council Resolution 425, which in 1978 demanded Israel's unconditional withdrawal from Lebanon "forthwith."

The United States, Israel's main patron, financier and arms supplier, has been particularly culpable by repeatedly using its diplomatic muscle, including its Security Council veto, to protect Israel from international criticism after its invasions and atrocities. Rather than helping enforce Resolution 425, which it voted for, the U.S. government line has been that "all foreign forces should withdraw from Lebanon."

This was an obvious ploy intended to buy time and space for Israel by drawing a false moral and legal equivalence between Israel's brutal and illegal occupation of south Lebanon and the Syrian presence in Lebanon. Syria's role there is controversial, supported by many and opposed by others as overbearing, while the Israeli occupation was

universally despised, as was amply demonstrated by the instantaneous collapse of its proxy militia. Had the United States been willing to stand by international law rather than making disingenuous excuses for outrageous Israeli conduct, the international community might have been able to act responsibly toward Lebanon.

The obvious questions now are: Will Israel be forced to complete its withdrawal from all of Lebanon, or will it be allowed to hang on to the Shabaa Farms, where it has built a ski resort and a settlement for Ethiopians? Will Israel be seriously pressured to release the Lebanese hostages, or will it yet again be granted an exception to the most basic international human rights norms? Will Israel be made to pay the reparations it owes to the Lebanese for the invasions, bombings and occupation, as is supposed to now be the norm for international aggressors? When will the American government and media acknowledge that Lebanese and Arab lives and rights are as important and worthy as those of Israelis?

Finally, and most importantly, will the international community at long last live up to its responsibility to prevent Israel from ever again invading or bombing Lebanon and murdering its people?

STATE REPRESENTATIVE PHYLLIS MUNDY RECEIVES ATHENA AWARD

HON. PAUL E. KANJORSKI

OF PENNSYLVANIA

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 6, 2000

Mr. KANJORSKI. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to pay tribute to State Representative Phyllis Mundy of the 120th Legislative District in Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, who will receive the prestigious ATHENA Award from the Greater Wilkes-Barre Chamber of Commerce of Business and Industry at its annual Business Awards Luncheon on June 8.

The ATHENA honor is presented to a person who has attained professional excellence, devoted time and energy to the community in an meaningful way, and assisted women in attaining their full potential. That description certainly applies to Representative Mundy.

Phyllis is one of the hardest working, most effective, and more committed legislators in Pennsylvania, and I am proud to consider her a friend as well as a colleague. I consider her a valued partner and a true asset and leader for the community, as well as for the entire Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

She is a strong leader who has done an outstanding job encouraging women in Northeastern Pennsylvania and throughout the state. From her support of programs like WILL—Women in Legislative Leadership—to the assistance she provides to lower-income working women and their children, she exemplifies the qualities recognized in the ATHENA Award.

She has authored many legislative proposals to assist women, including bipartisan legislation to establish the "Ounce of Prevention" home visiting initiative to provide early

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