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FRIENDS COMMITTEE ON NATIONAL LEGISLATION

... a Quaker lobby in the public interest

June 10 2009

Rep. Barbara Lee
2444 Rayburn House Office Bldg.
Washington, DC

Dear Rep. Lee,

Thank you very much for your prescient and courageous statement on the House floor today in opposition to the amendment to the Foreign Relations Authorization Act offered by Rep. Pete Sessions (TX). The amendment asserted that "Israel has the inalienable right to defend itself in the face of an imminent nuclear or military threat from Iran, terrorist organizations, and the countries that harbor them,"

The amendment, as you rightly said, is a blank check. Its approval by the House provides political support for any future military action Israel might decide to take against a number of countries in a variety of circumstances, including circumstances that some in Congress argue already exist.

There is, as you noted, a well-recognized right in international law for a country to act in self-defense against an actual attack or to take pre-emptive military action against an imminent attack when other protective responses are not possible, but the Sessions amendment wrongly and dangerously affirms a non-existent right to launch a preventive war against a self-perceived imminent "threat." The House in approving the amendment has affirmed the Bush administration's preventive war doctrine and extended it to Israel.

Some argue that the progress of Iran's nuclear program or its missile development to date, or the continued existence of armed groups like Hizbollah and Hamas constitute imminent threats to Israel. Proponents of this view will interpret the Sessions amendment as an enabling resolution for any future Israeli military action, even action taken without the support of the U.S. administration.

Thank you very much for your opposition to this irresponsible and dangerous amendment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jim Fine".

Jim Fine
Legislative Secretary, Foreign Policy