

I'm pleased that a ceasefire has been reached. The recent events in Israel and Gaza were tragic. We saw again the pattern of violence in which relentless Hamas aggression provoked Israel's absolute right to defend itself – a right President Obama made clear that America supports. Though Egypt is in uncharted political waters, their constructive engagement in negotiations is promising. Secretary Clinton's personal involvement was instrumental in obtaining the cessation of violence and demonstrates the administration's high level of commitment. I welcome the success of Iron Dome in protecting innocent Israelis from rocket fire, which is the result of the United States' dedication to high-level technological and security cooperation with Israel, because no family should have to live under the constant fear of an attack. This struggle will never be solved by armed conflict. Hamas must take responsibility for its actions now and in the future because the pain they unjustly inflict on Israel also hurts Palestinians by putting a peaceful resolution further out of reach. It's my hope that Israel's leadership will undermine Hamas in the most effective way possible – by strictly adhering to the ceasefire agreement and showing the Palestinian people that Israel is committed to a permanent peace through a negotiated two-state solution. Four years ago, Operation Cast Lead secured a temporary peace. This time, the rockets fired from Gaza were more numerous and more powerful. Without a political resolution to this conflict, the parties will again face another crisis, where Hamas will be armed with deadlier weapons, harming more innocent civilians, further entrenching opposition. The events of the last two weeks have demonstrated that the Obama Administration must continue their strong leadership and engagement with Israel and the Palestinian leaders to reach a negotiated two-state solution.