

North Shore Coalition *for* Peace *and* Justice

Twenty Harvard Street • Gloucester, Massachusetts 01930

The Honorable Elizabeth Warren
2400 JFK Federal Building
15 New Sudbury Street
Boston, MA 02203

September 11, 2014

Re: "Liberal democracies ...that are controlled by the rule of law"

"I think the vote was right, and I'll tell you why I think the vote was right," she said. "America has a very special relationship with Israel. Israel lives in a very dangerous part of the world, and a part of the world where there aren't many liberal democracies and democracies that are controlled by the rule of law. And we very much need an ally in that part of the world."

*Warren explains positions on Israel, Pilgrim
Cape Cod Times, August 21, 2014*

Dear Senator Warren,

Respectfully, and with genuine admiration for the intellectual rigor for which you are known, we must question the rationale you advance in support of H.J. Res. 76 ("to provide funding to Israel for the Iron Dome defense system.")

Various justifications for US funding of "Iron Dome" have been made over the years. Some ring true: that, for example, spending on this technology benefits US military contractors, in particular Massachusetts-based Raytheon Company; or that the system is designed to save civilian lives (though when a citizenry is thereby emboldened to conduct offensive measures of even greater lethality, the moral calculus is distinctly clouded).

But you base your approval on other grounds, specifically, on a proposition that – while it may be a commonplace in the halls of Congress – is regarded with scorn by peoples around the world. Even among progressives here in Massachusetts, the outdated contention that Israel is *a liberal democracy controlled by the rule of law* generates increasing discomfort.

This description may have some applicability for Israeli Jews. (Though recent and alarming encroachments on the civil liberties of Jews in Israel opposed to the occupation, are widely attested.)

But it is blatantly not the case for Israeli non-Jews living within the 1967 borders: "citizens" in name but not "Jewish nationals" and thereby subject to a discriminatory regime of currently 57 separate laws that enforce an ethno-cultural distinction unheard of for any other "liberal democracy."

Nor is it the case for would-be Arab Members of the Knesset who, since passage this summer of a Likud Beiteinu “reform,” will now find it next to impossible to meet electoral thresholds. Nor is it the case for plaintiffs in a case decided this summer by the Israeli Supreme Court, who were told that the Jewish State need only “*aspire to offer appropriate equality*” (emphasis added).

And to 4.5 million Palestinians living in territories subject continuously to siege, blockade, invasion, barriers, checkpoints, expropriations, home demolitions, arbitrary arrest, and segregation on a scale unimaginable even in the “Jim Crow” era of the Southern US – talk of *a liberal democracy controlled by the rule of law* is simply grotesque.

We ask that you reflect on this non-democratic face of our “much need[ed] ally” in greater depth and in fuller conscience.

Please make it your business to learn more about the repeated findings of humanitarian NGO’s (Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Médecins Sans Frontières, the International Committee of the Red Cross – to name but a few) whose expertise and objectivity once mattered to progressive politicians in our country.

Please visit those places and speak with those people in the Occupied Territories that AIPAC’s 501(c)(3) arm, the American Israel Education Foundation, did *not* show to Mindy Myers on her 7-day visit last March.

Please keep faith with those among your supporters who trust in your instinct for justice and in the limits you set to political expedience.

Like your support for Iron Dome funding, your co-sponsorship of “S. 2673: United States-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2014” is ill-considered. The commercial ties you have cited as benefitting Massachusetts are in no need of federal underwriting. Moreover, passage of S. 2673 will be rightly seen as a vote of approval for Israel’s recent conduct in Gaza and its thwarting of Secretary Kerry’s peacemaking efforts.

The US cannot be a better friend to Israel than by noticing how the peril to its character as a “liberal democracy” is as grave an “existential threat” as any posed by the comparatively impotent terrorism of its armed opponents.

Sincerely,

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on behalf of *The North Shore Coalition for Peace and Justice*