

# Baird Wants U.S. to Reassess Aid to Israel

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*Note from Pastor Kevin Lea follows this article.*

A U.S. congressman plans to brief fellow members of Congress and the Obama administration about his recent trip to Gaza, saying the U.S. should pressure Israel regarding border closures and reassess its military support for the Jewish state.

Rep. Brian Baird, a Democrat from Washington State, visited Gaza last week with fellow Democratic Rep. Keith Ellison of Minnesota and was struck by "the level of destruction, the scope of it, specifically the civilian targets - schools, hospitals, industry." Baird also said Israel had "apparently willfully destroyed any capacity of the Palestinians to rebuild their own infrastructure."

The trip to Gaza by Baird and Ellison coincided with a separate visit there by John Kerry, chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. Their presence marked the first time members of Congress had visited Gaza since U.S. personnel were killed in a roadside bomb in 2003.

Baird maintained that his fellow congressmen would benefit from his first-hand account of the situation in Gaza, as well as from photos and video footage he took. In addition to pictures of physical devastation in Gaza and families living in make-shift shelters there, Baird also has photos of damage from rocket fire on Sderot, which he condemned and planned to share as well. He also indicated he would like to bring in aid and medical workers from Gaza to share their stories. "If our colleagues had seen what we have seen, I think their understanding of the situation would be significantly impacted," he said. "They would care about what happened to the Palestinians."

Baird added that he hoped they, as well as members of the Obama administration, would come away with a sense that "the U.S. has a responsibility to insist on a change in the situation in Gaza and the situation in the West Bank." The congressman said he would like to see more humanitarian aid and goods reaching the people of Gaza, accompanied by open border crossings that would allow Palestinians to travel for trade and medical care.

He also said he was troubled by the American origin of so much of the IDF weaponry used in Gaza, and suggested that the U.S. should reconsider the military aid it provides and the weapons it sells to Israel. "We need to use every pressure available to make these needed changes happen," he said.

Baird said the Congressional briefing could come as early as next week, with administration briefings being more tentative. He has also talked to Ellison about penning op-eds and otherwise raising awareness of the issue. Ellison's office had not responded to queries from The Jerusalem Post by press time.

Pro-Israel organizations were chagrined at the message Baird was preparing to deliver to his colleagues but said they weren't concerned that many minds would be changed. "By and large, we continue to see support for Israel and understand why it was necessary for Israel's leaders to do what they did," one

official said about Congress, speaking anonymously. "I'm not afraid of these members coming back and giving a briefing."

A representative from a dovish Israeli group welcomed Baird's efforts to publicize his experience in Gaza, noting that it was unusual to hold Congressional briefings presenting this perfect, but also didn't expect members' attitudes towards Israel to change. "To expect that that would bring about a sharp change in Congress's attitude toward Israel is a reach," he said.

Meanwhile, the State Department said Monday that Secretary of State Hillary Clinton would pledge a "substantial" amount of aid for Gaza and the Palestinian Authority at a donors' meeting in Egypt next week. The conference, to take place in Sharm e-Sheikh on March 2, was called to raise funds for the reconstruction of Gaza. "The United States will announce a substantial pledge of humanitarian assistance and support for the Palestinian Authority," an official said.

The official declined to give a figure because Congress had yet to approve the sum, but said it could amount to hundreds of millions of dollars. Preliminary estimates have put the damage in the Gaza Strip following Operation Cast Lead at nearly \$2 billion.

***Note from Pastor Kevin Lea:*** *Gaza's official government (Hamas) swears that they will not rest until they have eliminated the nation of Israel from the map and killed or driven out the five million Jews who live there. As a demonstration of their murderous desires, they have launched thousands of missiles into Israel in the last couple years. Israel (like any nation would) used its right of self defense to try and destroy Hamas' ability to wage war against Israel. Israel should have been applauded by the entire world, but instead those bent on evil murder are pampered and supported by people like Rep Baird while those defending themselves are castigated as the lawless aggressor. The nations are certainly coming against Israel just like the prophets predicted they would in the last days. Someone should warn Baird and Obama that the prophets also predict destruction upon the nations that come against God's chosen people. Baird's number is (202) 225-3536.*

***Zech 2:8-9, 12:2-3*** *For thus says the LORD of hosts: "He sent Me after glory, to the nations which plunder you; for he who touches you touches the apple of His eye. <sup>9</sup>For surely I will shake My hand against them, and they shall become spoil for their servants. Then you will know that the LORD of hosts has sent Me." ---- 12:2 "Behold, I will make Jerusalem a cup of drunkenness to all the surrounding peoples, when they lay siege against Judah and Jerusalem. <sup>3</sup>And it shall happen in that day that I will make Jerusalem a very heavy stone for all peoples; all who would heave it away will surely be cut in pieces, though all nations of the earth are gathered against it." (NKJ)*

***Micah 4:11-13*** *Now also many nations have gathered against you, who say, "Let her be defiled, and let our eye look upon Zion." <sup>12</sup>But they do not know the thoughts of the LORD, nor do they understand His counsel; for He will gather them like sheaves to the threshing floor. <sup>13</sup>"Arise and thresh, O daughter of Zion; for I will make your horn iron, and I will make your hooves bronze; you shall beat in pieces many peoples; I will consecrate their gain to the LORD, and their substance to the Lord of the whole earth." (NKJ)*