

Representative Henry A. Waxman
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Israel's operation in Gaza is an act of self defense. It is a blatant double standard for those who criticize Israel to expect any nation to stand idle as its cities and citizens are indiscriminately shelled with thousands of mortars and rockets.

Hamas has abused its perch in Gaza to serve only its own terrorist ambitions. Instead of building roads, Hamas constructed tunnels to smuggle missiles and weapons. Instead of building hospitals, Hamas embedded its rocket launchers, ammunition depots and supply routes to maximize risk for civilian populations.

Those of us who embrace the hope for a two state solution recognize that Israel must succeed in stopping Hamas and delegitimizing its tactics. If Israel cannot prevail, it would be a huge setback for the prospect of peace and reconciliation. It would be hard to imagine Israel agreeing to a Palestinian state on the West Bank if it could become a staging ground for missile attacks on major population centers.