

Washington, DC—Congressman Steve Israel (D-NY), member of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, issued the following statement in response to the speech before a Joint Session of Congress by King Abdullah of Jordan:

I'm surprised by the focus of his speech. While he appropriately asked for a resumption of the peace process in the Middle East, he was very imbalanced in identifying the obstacles to that peace process. He failed to acknowledge that the Israelis offered 98% of the West Bank and Gaza; he failed to acknowledge that Israel left Gaza unilaterally; he failed to acknowledge that every time the Israelis have offered peace, the reward has been more bombings and violence.

I expected to hear a speech about Iraq; instead, I was troubled to hear the suggestion that the fact that Sunni and Shia are murdering each other is somehow the fault of the Israelis. This implication is a dangerous one and completely unacceptable.

The discomfort I have is that he was trying to give two speeches at the same time. One was for citizens of Jordan. The other speech was to a U.S. audience urging a jump start of peace talks. I'm not sure that you can satisfy both audiences with the same speech at the same time.