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SECURITY FENCES -- (House of Representatives - February 24, 2004)

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The SPEAKER pro tempore. Under a previous order of the House, the gentleman from Indiana (Mr. Souder) is recognized for 5 minutes.

Mr. SOUDER. Mr. Speaker, I am so sick and tired of listening to the whining about this fence and walls in Israel. First, when I heard the complaining about the wall in Israel, I wondered whether they were complaining about the wall around Jerusalem itself. Walls and fences in the Middle East are as historic as the land itself.

I was just in Germany, and in pretty much every city they have a castle or a walled fort. That is true all over Europe, Austria, and other places. Walls and fences have been there historically, and they were not to keep people from leaving. They were to keep people from getting in. They were built in areas where there were disputed territories, or they would not have needed a wall if people were not going to attack them.

In Rome, we see all sorts of walls in different parts of the Roman Empire. It is a historic tradition in Europe. And, of course, there is the Great Wall of China that goes for thousands of miles and is fairly famous. When we look at our own country, let us say the border with Mexico where we have a fence that goes along the border with Mexico, or let us say gated neighborhoods in the United States, are we suddenly going to ban gated neighborhoods? Is the rule when we want to put a fence around our yard or security system at our house in order to keep people from intruding, are we going to say suddenly we need to unlock our doors and we can put no fences up in our own yards? It is the same basic principle of security and the right to protect your property and the people that live in it that is leading to all this whining about the fence in Israel.

Furthermore, some would add that it is disputed territory. The fact that somebody else has designs on the territory does not mean that you cannot put up a fence. Let us take our border with Mexico. There are some in the country of Mexico that believe that us getting California through a war where we had a clear overt pressure was kind of controversial, not to mention the Gasden Purchase where we more or less forced Mexico to sell us Arizona and New Mexico, or where we pushed settlers into Texas and Texas declared their independence and we did a fast recognition to bring Texas in. There are many Mexicans who do not believe that border is legitimate, but does that mean we do not have a right as a Nation, since we recognize those States, we freely associate and recognize them that way, that we do not

have a right to put a fence there to protect ourselves from terrorists, illegal immigrants or drugs? Of course we have that right; and so does Israel have that right.

Since September 2000, Palestinian terrorists have launched more than 18,000 attacks, killing more than 800 Israelis and wounding 5,600. Such a high number of attacks seem inconsistent with the Palestinian Authority's commitment under the Oslo Accords and Road Map to curb terrorist activities. Without a true partner in peace, Israel alone has been left to defend itself.

One of the best methods of protecting the citizens of Israel is a security fence. In the last 3 years, not one of the 122 homicide bombers that killed 454 people in Israel infiltrated from Gaza. Gaza is separated from Israel by a security fence.

Despite this, there has been outrage and wide criticism when they have tried to put a fence at the West Bank. This case, which has now been taken to the court in front of the United Nations, is clearly within Israel's domestic jurisdiction, which demands that a government protects its citizens.

Highlighting this necessity was a bombing of a Jerusalem bus that just killed eight and injured 60. This homicide bombing occurred just before the international court began hearing the case against the fence. The need for additional security and the need for the fence in Israel has never been more clear. I am sick and tired of the whining and hypocrisy of many around the world who have built their own fences, built their own walls for thousands of years, and now want to stop Israel from defending itself.

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Shortly after achieving independence in 1948, the newly formed State of Israel was set upon by its Arab neighbors. Despite an overwhelming opposing force, the fledgling country defeated its attackers. Since that time, Israel has been buffeted by harassment and violence in varying degrees of intensity. In each attack, whether by neighboring states or terrorist groups, Israel has admirably safeguarded its people and defended its borders.

While Israel has long worked to protect its people, Palestinian Arabs have only recently shown a willingness to dismantle terrorist networks and confiscate illegal weapons. Unfortunately, whether through complete duplicity or half-hearted enforcement of their commitments, terrorist attacks against Israelis continue. Regrettably, there is no sign of any serious effort on the part of the Palestinian Authority to take any action against terrorists.

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Despite the proven effectiveness of the Gaza security fence, Israel's recent decision to build a similar security fence around the West Bank has been roundly criticized. In an effort to halt the construction of the fence, a suit has been filed in the International Court of Justice. This case is unprecedented in the history of the court. The court was set up to adjudicate international disputes between two members of the United Nations. In this case, the dispute is not between two U.N. members--the Palestinian Authority

is not a member of the United States. The actual U.N. member involved, Israel, has not agreed to the hearing.

This case falls squarely within Israel's domestic jurisdiction which demands that the government protect its citizens. Highlighting this necessity was the bombing of a Jerusalem bus that killed 8 and injured 60. This homicide bombing occurred just before the International Court began hearing the case against the fence. The need for additional security and the need for the fence has never been more clear.

Opponents argue that the fence poses undue hardship to Palestinian Arabs by limiting their employment opportunities or separating them from other Arabs and each other. Certainly, the fence poses a hardship to Palestinian Arabs. The extra security will

undoubtedly cause difficulties when moving from the West Bank into Israel but the Israeli government has done its best to be as accommodating as possible. In most places, the fence follows the pre-1967 border. Israel has provided passageways for Palestinian Arab farmers to tend their fields, replanted trees uprooted by fence construction, and protected a water reservoir used by West Bank farmers. In recent days, Israel has shortened the fence citing among its considerations the impact on Palestinian Arabs living near the fence.

As obliging as Israel has been in constructing the security fence, Israel should never be forced to sacrifice its security for convenience. Palestinian Arabs tired of Israel's security measures need only demand that their leaders live up to their commitments to rein in terrorist groups based in the West Bank and Gaza.

It is unfortunate that opponents denounce Israel for protecting itself while ignoring the terrorist attacks that precipitated the need for the fence. At \$1.6 million per mile, I am sure that Israel would prefer to spend its money elsewhere. Unfortunately, the current level of terrorist activity precludes Israel from doing that.

Israel does not wish harm upon its neighbors. Since its establishment, it has only wished to live in peace. Regrettably, Israel's neighbors have never shared this vision. Relentless attacks have forced the Israelis to take steps that seem punitive but only serve to defend the State of Israel and its citizens.

I applaud Israel's security measures. Israel simply has done what the United States of America does everyday, which is protect its

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citizens from forces that would harm or destroy them.

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