

For Immediate Release



NEWS RELEASE
Congressman Joe Wilson
Second District of South Carolina



May 4, 2002

Wilson Asks That Senator Hollings Apologize for Defamatory Remarks Against Israeli Prime Minister Sharon

WASHINGTON, D.C. -- Today, Rep. Joe Wilson, R-SC, wrote a letter to Senator Ernest Hollings, D-SC, asking him to apologize for the statements he made regarding Israeli Prime Minister Ariel Sharon on May 2, 2002 while speaking on the U.S. Senate Floor.

“As an elected official of South Carolina and one of the most senior United States leaders, Senator Hollings made remarks about Israeli Prime Minister Sharon that were appalling to me, and out of step with the nation and South Carolina,” said Rep. Wilson. “Hollings actually compared Prime Minister Sharon with Saddam Hussein and Bull Connor, accusations that are completely ridiculous.”

“Today, I wrote to Senator Hollings and asked that he apologize to Prime Minister Sharon, the Jewish community, the people of South Carolina and the nation for these attacks.

“Israel is America’s most dependable ally, and we must stand side-by-side with them against terrorism. At the very least, we should expect that our elected officials would not go around comparing the leaders of our allies with evil, brutal dictators,” said Rep. Wilson.

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<http://www.house.gov/joewilson>

-Wesley M. Denton
Communications Director
Congressman Joe Wilson's Office (SC, 2nd District)
2405 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515
P: 202-225-2452
F: 202-225-2455
Wesley.Denton@mail.house.gov
<http://www.house.gov/joewilson>

-LETTER TO SENATOR HOLLINGS ATTACHED-

May 4, 2002

Senator Ernest Hollings
125 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Senator Hollings:

I was very disheartened to hear your recent remarks on the Senate floor prior to your vote against S. Amdt. 3389, a resolution which stated that the United States and Israel were “engaged in a common struggle against terrorism,” and condemned Palestinian suicide bombings. During that time you made the following comments:

*“Now the U.N. formed a team to investigate the incursion into Jenin. Sharon refuses to let the U.N. investigate, so in a way **he’s acting like Saddam Hussein**... I made a comment in the earlier part of the year that I thought **Ariel Sharon was the Bull Conner of Israel.**”- Senator Hollings, May 2, 2002*

I was personally offended by these remarks, as were the overwhelming majority of South Carolinians with whom I have spoken. South Carolina has a large Jewish community of which I am sure you are aware of, and it is beyond careless to compare Ariel Sharon, our ally and Israel’s democratically elected leader, with Saddam Hussein, an evil and brutal dictator.

You also equated Sharon with Bull Connor, the Police Commissioner of Birmingham, Alabama in 1963 who unleashed attack-dogs and fire hoses on peaceful protestors of the civil-rights movement led by Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. It seems to me that you are comparing Yasir Arafat to Dr. King, and comparing the evil suicide-bombings being carried out by Palestinian terrorists to the peaceful protests of the civil-rights movement. This is beyond ridiculous; it is cruel and malicious.

I urge you to rescind these attacks on our ally’s chosen leader, and apologize to Ariel Sharon, the Jewish community, the people of South Carolina and the nation, for your remarks before Prime Minister Sharon meets with President George W. Bush this week.

Very truly yours,
Joe Wilson
Member of Congress