

Bill Kaplan: Will GOP-led House help Israel and Ukraine?

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After the horrifying slaughter of 1,200 Israelis and others by Hamas and deadly Israeli response, there is now a pause. A temporary cease-fire, negotiated with the assistance of Qatar and the Biden administration, led to the release of some hostages taken by Hamas. Moreover, more humanitarian aid entered Gaza, and, the cease-fire may be extended to facilitate the release of more hostages. Is it time to think of tomorrow?

Despite living on the same land many Israelis and Palestinians don't see their common humanity. However, neither people are going elsewhere. False narratives that Israel is a colonial power, guilty of genocide, and that most Palestinians are terrorists, fuel permanent war. Bleak as it is, despair is not an option. Although a two-state solution seems impossible it still is the best roadmap to ending the longstanding conflict between Israelis and Palestinians.

Wisconsin Democratic Senator Tammy Baldwin said: "We (other Senate Democrats) support additional assistance to Israel that: aligns with an Israeli strategy (to) degrade and defeat the threat from Hamas; prioritizes the release of hostages; (and supports) a long-term vision for peace, security and Palestinian self-determination in the form of a two-state solution"

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However, that requires that Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu must go because of the intelligence-military failure to detect Hamas preparations for their murderous attack. Similarly, far-right Israeli cabinet ministers who call for using nuclear

weapons, expelling Palestinians from Gaza or expanding Israeli West Bank settlements must resign. All of this is crazy talk. Moreover, although Israel is predominantly Jewish, 20 percent of its citizens are Palestinian-Israelis. One serves on the Israeli Supreme Court and others in the Knesset. Their voices must be heard.

The U.S. must continue helping our ally by facilitating the release of all hostages taken by Hamas, reaffirming as President Biden has, U.S. support for a two-state solution and emergency military aid for Israel. The GOP-led House has played games with no aid to Ukraine and conditioning emergency aid to Israel with defunding the IRS. All Wisconsin GOP representatives voted yes, while state Democratic representatives voted no (because of the IRS defunding). However, IRS defunding will “increase the deficit by \$90 billion over 10 years” (Washington Post). With fewer IRS staff and paused software upgrades the super-rich will likely never be audited for tax cheating.

The NYT reported: former Trump-appointed IRS Commissioner Charles Rettig said: that tax cheats cost “\$1 trillion in unpaid taxes every year”, partly because of “the abuse of pass-through provisions in the tax code by companies.” Remember this loophole was expanded by Wisconsin GOP Senator Ron Johnson. He is on board with the GOP-led House nonsense. Enough soundbites.

The GOP-led House should get serious. Introduce legislation for emergency military aid to Israel and Ukraine, assistance to Taiwan (threats from China) and funding to secure the U.S.-Mexico border. Such a package would pass with widespread bipartisan support. It’s time for Wisconsin GOP representatives to move beyond games. Will Wisconsin GOP Representative Mike Gallagher help lead to pass this vital deal?

-Kaplan wrote a guest column from Washington, D.C., for the Wisconsin State Journal from 1995 - 2009.