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Opening Statement of the Honorable **Ed Royce (R-CA)**, Chairman
House Foreign Affairs Committee Hearing:
Words Have Consequences: Palestinian Authority Incitement to
Violence
October 22, 2015

(As prepared for delivery)

This hearing will come to order. This morning we consider the recent wave of terror that has gripped Israel.

In a span of weeks, Palestinian militants have attacked more than a hundred Jews, killing ten. A 2-year old toddler, a 13-year old on a bike and a 70- year old woman on a bus are among those wounded. This is terrorism at its core – when anyone who steps outside could be next.

These attacks, mainly stabbings, have been driven by a deliberately misleading message. Palestinian Authority officials and extremist clerics have falsely claimed that Israelis are trying to change the “status quo” by limiting Muslim access to the Temple Mount/al-Aqsa Mosque compound that is holy to both faiths.

The calls for killing have been amplified on social media as Arabic hashtags like “the knife intifada,” “poison the knife before you stab,” and “slaughtering the Jews,” rapidly spread a message to attack Jewish men, women and children. PA President Abbas regrettably has joined the hate speech.

Israel is contending with a deep-seated hatred, nurtured by Palestinian leaders over many years in mosques, schools, newspapers, and TV channels. Consider growing up in an environment in which television shows regularly glorify terrorists who have killed Israeli civilians; where you are taught that Jews are sub-human. Or watching a small boy interviewed on television who speaks of wanting to be an engineer: “So that I can build bombs to blow up all the Jews.” Or seeing the family next door receive a generous stipend for their son igniting his suicide vest.

Perhaps most concerning, this culture of hate is being cultivated by Palestinian leaders. After being exposed day-in and day-out to these types of messages for most of their young lives, how else do we expect young people will react once the Palestinian president declares, “We welcome every drop of blood spilled in Jerusalem?”

And it doesn’t help when those in the media – or the Secretary of State for that matter – give this incitement a pass. Yes, there are many complexities in the Middle East, but there can be no moral equivalency when children as young as two are being stabbed. None. The U.S. should be speaking loudly and clearly – Palestinian officials must work to restore calm and renounce incendiary statements. And its leadership must be confronted with the questions: how does this incitement serve the interests of Palestinian men, women and children? How does this lay the groundwork for peace?

The international community also has a responsibility. Where is the international outcry for the generations of children which are growing up on blind hatred? Given that about one-third of the Palestinian Authority's budget is financed through foreign aid, international donors have leverage. They could follow the lead of the U.S. Congress – and make direct funding of the PA off limits until the incitement stops.

This is a very tough time for Israel. It is my hope that President Abbas and others will seek to restore calm in the coming days, and incitement is challenged so reconciliation has a chance.

I know turn to the Ranking Member for any opening comments he may have.