

***Middle East Study Group / Contra Costa  
Promoting Peace with Justice in the Middle East***

[www.middleeaststudygroup.org](http://www.middleeaststudygroup.org)

Sept 14, 2011

Congressman John Garamendi  
228 Cannon HOB,  
Washington DC 20515

Dear Congressman Garamendi,

We are members or supporters of the Middle East Study Group in Contra Costa County. The majority of us live in the 10<sup>th</sup> Congressional District. We are a diverse group, including Jewish Americans, Palestinian Americans, Christians, Muslims and Agnostics.

Thank you for your efforts to end the continuing wars and occupations of Afghanistan and Iraq. Thank you also for your previous willingness to hold community meetings.

It is partly because of your positive efforts that we were surprised and disappointed to learn that you were part of the Congressional group which spent a week in Israel during August. Business Week magazine dubbed the trip a "boondoggle". The disappointment is doubled because of the absence of community meetings this summer.

We suspect that the purpose of the hosted trip to Israel was to provide you with a one sided interpretation of the conflict and to reinforce personal connections. At a time when increasing numbers of people around the world see the Israeli government policy as racist and apartheid like, and when the bias of the US Congress is so blatant, we think that such a trip was ill advised and against our local and national interests.

When you were Insurance Commissioner for California, we doubt that you would have accepted a "fact finding" holiday sponsored by a friend of the insurance industry.

It is well known that "Pro Israel" zealots were in the forefront pushing for the invasion of Iraq which has done so much damage to US credibility and financial stability. Incredibly, these same forces are now pushing for conflict with Iran.

How can you remain objective when you allow yourself to be wined, dined, flown and hosted by a lobby "education" group?

We hope you will decline future sponsored vacations in favor of spending more time with your constituents. We also think it imperative that progressive Congresspeople start prioritizing our national and domestic needs rather than those of a foreign government.

We would like to request a meeting with you and your staff to discuss our concerns. We would be happy to provide you with written material and constructive suggestions toward a more balanced approach to this issue.

With the question of Palestinian statehood at the UN approaching, and the general unrest in the Middle East, is it not important for you to start hearing more than one perspective?

Please respond to MESHG c/o 450 North Civic Drive, #304, Walnut Creek, CA 94596.

Yours,  
Middle East Study Group Members and Supporters

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