How can we defeat terrorism?

The American foreign policy has been, for many decades, to install and support U.S. friendly dictators in developing countries to allegedly ensure that American interests are protected. President Franklin D. Roosevelt described it best when he made a comment that reflected the essence of that policy. He said, in reference to Nicaraguan dictator Tacho Somoza, "He might be a son of a bitch, but he's our son of a bitch."

It is hard for me to say anything good regarding the George W. Bush policies. His declaration, however, that the ultimate victory against al-Qaeda and the end of terrorism around the globe, hinges on the spread of freedom was a good observation. Unfortunately, George W. Bush and most of the administrations preceding him made common cause and forged close ties with corrupt regimes such as those found in the countries of the Middle East and North Africa.

Two issues in particular will be most effective in countering terrorism: (1) End the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian land captured in 1967 and lift the Gaza blockade. (2) Stop the war and the killing and withdraw from Iraq and Afghanistan.

As long as the Arab and Muslim people continue to be ruthlessly attacked by the Israeli military and feel that they are being unjustly treated by the Americans and ruled by the corrupt regimes, the terrorism will continue. In 1948, Palestinian people were attacked—villages were destroyed and villagers massacred—and they were driven by force from their homes into refugee camps by Zionist terror groups. In violation of international law, they were never allowed to return to their homes. Sixty-two years later, Palestinians are still invaded, brutalized, blockaded, and living in refugee camps.

In December 2008, the Israeli Defense Forces unleashed a military operation against the Palestinian people in Gaza. A devastating air and ground campaign left at least 1,300 Palestinians dead, including 200 women and more than 400 children. According to Amnesty International, Israeli military destroyed 14,000 homes, 219 factories, and 240 schools (UNDP estimates).

Ms. Rovera of Amnesty International said, "The destruction was, in our view, and according to our findings, wanton destruction—it could not be justified on military grounds." She also added, "Wanton destruction on a large scale would qualify as a war crime."

These type of crimes—the continued Israeli occupation of Palestinian land and the siege on Gaza, allowing in only basic supplies—have not only created a fertile recruiting ground for terrorist groups, they have also violated the right to freedom of movement of individuals, impacting the supply of food, clean water, and medicine required for the daily life of more than 1.5 million civilians living in the area. Additionally, civilian supplies of fuel, construction materials, and raw materials required for various economic sectors were severely cut as a result of this blockade.

This policy of collective punishment of the civilian population in the Gaza Strip by the Israelis supported by the American administrations; is prohibited under international humanitarian law and international human rights law. It constitutes a complete disregard of policy intended to prevent the victimizing of civilians by depriving them of their private living resources.

The high rate of unemployment in Gaza (60%), caused by the illegal blockade, has created severe poverty and a state of desperation among the people. A Palestinian mother said it best, "We're worrying day and night, 'When will this embargo be lifted?' A blockade like this pushes even our young people, who don't think about joining any militant groups, to do so. This pressure results in bad things and more pressure will cause an explosion". A nine-year-old Palestinian child said after losing her father and her four-year-old brother, "I used to love everyone, and now I hate everyone".

General Petraeus stated that "The enduring hostilities between Israel and some of its neighbors present distinct challenges to our ability to advance [U.S.] interests in the [region]. . . . The conflict foments anti-American sentiment. . . . Arab anger over the Palestinian question limits the strength and depth of U.S. partnerships with governments and peoples in the [region] and weakens the legitimacy of moderate

regimes in the Arab world. Meanwhile, al-Qaeda and other militant groups exploit that anger to mobilize support".

If we want a permanent solution to terrorism we must deal with *the problem* instead of *the consequences* of the problem. We can do this by beginning the process to end the two wars: the war in Iraq and in Afghanistan. Stop the killing of the Iraqi and Afghani and save the lives of our own soldiers. These wars create, among the Muslim people, a sense of being unjustly attacked, and it brings out the need for revenge. Al-Qaeda hopes these wars continue, so that they can maintain a constant influx of recruits.

Don't let Israel and the corrupt Arab regimes drag us into a new war against another Muslim country (Iran). It will multiply the problem many times over and increase terrorism.

Stop the blind support for Israel. Stop treating them as if they were above the law and exempt from being questioned regarding the war crimes they committed against the Palestinians (see Gold Stone Report). Stop using the veto to cover-up these crimes.

Have the Israeli lift the blockade on Gaza.

Pressure the Israelis to stop building new settlements on Palestinian land and get the peace negotiations back on track. Most of all, be an honest broker; I mean a really an honest broker in dealing with the peace negotiation between the Palestinians and the Israelis.

Demand democracy from the countries of the Middle East and stop protecting the corrupt regimes in the Arab and Muslim world.