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House of Representatives

COMMEMORATING THE 67TH ANNIVERSARY OF ISRAEL'S INDEPENDENCE

HON. KATHLEEN RICE

OF NEW YORK

Miss RICE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to commemorate the 67th anniversary of Israel's independence. On this day, Yom Ha'atzmaut, we celebrate Israel's establishment as a sovereign state and as a homeland for the Jewish people.

Rising from the ashes of the Holocaust, Israel has come to embody the true meaning of perseverance and resilience. Since its declaration of independence in 1948, Israel has overcome seemingly insurmountable challenges, defending itself time and again against enemies seeking to destroy it. Today, Israel stands proudly alongside the world's most developed nations and as the Middle East's sole true democracy—one rooted in equality and freedom of speech and religion.

However, this prosperity has come at a high price, as over 20,000 brave Israeli men and women have given their lives in service to their country. That is why this week we also observe Yom Hazikaron, to pay tribute to the Israeli service members who made the ultimate sacrifice and to thousands of Israeli civilians who lost their lives in senseless acts of terror.

Sadly, in the post-9/11 world, the United States has also grown familiar with the threat of terrorism and we have watched our own men and women give their lives to defeat it. This

common struggle has created yet another bond between our nations, as we both understand the indiscriminant, unjustifiable evil of terrorism, the irreparable pain it causes, and the swift, unequivocal response necessary to destroy it.

So today, we celebrate more than just 67 years of Israeli independence – we celebrate 67 years of strong and unwavering U.S.-Israeli relations.

I am proud to have visited Israel as a citizen of the United States, and I look forward to returning this summer as a member of Congress representing New York's fourth district, which is home to many people of the Jewish faith and has a special bond with the State of Israel and the Israeli people. During my time in Israel, I saw firsthand the prosperity that this great nation has built, as well as the fear that accompanies the daily threat of terrorism. On Israel's 67th year of independence, I want to congratulate the Israeli people and assure them that the U.S. will forever remain committed to their security, their survival and their prosperity.