



# PROJECT *on* Middle East Democracy

www.pomed.org ♦ P.O. Box 25533 ♦ Washington, DC 20027-8533

---

## Hearing of the House Committee on Foreign Affairs **International Relations Budget for Fiscal Year 2009**

2237 Rayburn House, 13 February 2008, 2:00PM

The House Committee on Foreign Affairs held a hearing on the International Relations Budget for Fiscal Year 2009. The witness was The Honorable **Condoleezza Rice**, Secretary of State. The hearing was presided over by Acting Chairman **Rep. Howard Berman**. Secretary Rice was questioned by various members of the committee on a variety of foreign issues.

In response to a question about Egypt's response to the destruction of the wall at the border with Gaza, Rice responded by saying that Egypt had learned "a lesson." She continued to say that recent events were not in Egypt's best interest and further work would continue to make the border more secure, saying that the "status quo was not sustainable". Rice then said that the 1.3 billion dollars of aid that Egypt receives to maintain its security forces is vital for the security of the country.

When asked about the President **Pervez Musharraf** and the upcoming elections in Pakistan, Rice said that the U.S. has been "focused" on making the elections free, fair and credible to the people. There will be many international observers, mainly from European countries. She asked for the Pakistani people to refrain from any violence during the elections.

Regarding the small amount of reconstruction aid being requested for Afghanistan, 1 billion dollars, Rice pointed out that in the last 5 years there has been over 20 billion dollars worth of aid poured in Afghanistan, 14 billion for reconstruction. She acknowledged the link between Afghanistan's stability and the U.S.'s national security. The aid for Afghanistan will focus on building an infrastructure in the country, consisting of roads, coal power, and other needs. She also said that the U.S. needs to be better coordinated with the international community when it comes to reconstruction efforts in Afghanistan. Regarding the status of Afghani security forces, Rice noted that the Afghan army was progressing very well but that the police force has yet to make the needed progress.

Rice's response to the questions about the current political situation in Iraq and new diplomatic surge in the Middle East was optimistic. She talked about improvement of the security situation in Iraq due to our military actions. With this security, local citizens have created committees that have started to defend themselves with the support of provincial councils, citing as an example the more well known "Awakening" group. At the national level, progress is also being made, citing as examples the recent passage of the de-Baathification law, a Provincial Powers Law and the 2008 budget. Regarding a diplomatic surge, she was optimistic about the prospects of an Iraqi neighbor committee that would organize the states bordering Iraq to work together to bring greater security for themselves and Iraq and help them become stabilizing forces in the region.