



FOR PLANNING PURPOSES ONLY

June 3, 2009

CONTACT:

Sue Walitsky 202-224-4524 or
202-320-0819

CARDIN PRAISES OBAMA SPEECH TO THE MUSLIM WORLD, CALLS ON THE PRESIDENT TO PRESS FOR HUMAN RIGHTS THROUGHOUT THE MIDDLE EAST

Washington, DC – U.S. Senator Benjamin L. Cardin (D-MD), a member of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee and Chairman of the U.S. Helsinki Commission, released the following statement in response to President Obama’s address in Egypt:

“President Barack Obama’s speech today took an historic step in attempting to bridge the enormous, dangerous gulf of misunderstanding between the United States and the Muslim world. His intention, to reach out an open and peaceful hand to the Muslim community, is necessary and worthy. I salute the President for his eloquence in representing important core truths to the world about American principles -- principles that the President himself uniquely symbolizes for so many here in the United States and around the world.

“I thought it was particularly important that President Obama clarified some fundamental positions of the United States: our ‘unbreakable bond’ with the State of Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East region; the fact that the issue of nuclear weapons and Iran has reached a ‘decisive point;’ and the fact that the United States seeks no military bases in either Iraq or Afghanistan.

“I also respect the President's decision to travel from the Middle East to the Buchenwald concentration camp, a tangible reminder of the Holocaust.

“Moving forward, it will be important for the United States, as the President indicated, to say both privately and publicly, a number of hard truths. Foremost among them is a clear, unambiguous commitment of the United States to human rights – not as a personal belief of any political leader or simply an Administration policy, but as an obligation of our country towards international law and universal principles. I will press President Obama and his administration to unabashedly press for the cause of human rights in the countries he visits, Egypt and Saudi Arabia, and other countries in the region.”

###