

Weidenfeld, Emily Livingston and Priscilla Ayres, and I call on my colleagues to join me in tribute.

ON THE 20TH ANNIVERSARY OF
THE CAPTURE OF ZACHARY
BAUMEL

HON. ANTHONY D. WEINER

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

Tuesday, June 11, 2002

Mr. WEINER. Mr. Speaker, on June 11, 1982, during a battle with Syrian and Palestinians forces on the Israeli-Lebanese border, five Israeli soldiers were captured by Syrian forces. Several years later, two of the captured soldiers were returned to Israel in prisoner exchanges with Syria. But today, twenty years later, we still know nothing of three of these soldiers, Zachary Baumel, Tzvi Feldman, and Yehuda Katz.

One of these soldiers, Zachary Baumel, is a U.S. citizen, and a former resident of my congressional district.

On a number of occasions, I have met with Zachary's parents, and listened to them tell me of the years of effort to gain any information about their son. For the most part, this has been a fruitless quest. But the greatest injustice is not that they have been unable to discover any information about the well-being of their son. The greatest injustice is that there are those out there who know where Zachary is, and yet, they refuse to share this information.

Mr. Speaker, the United States must not permit those who know the whereabouts of Zachary Baumel to keep this information to themselves. In 1993, PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat delivered one-half of Zachary Baumel's

dog tag to Israeli Government. Clearly he has a connection to those who are holding him, yet he has done nothing to assist in bringing Zach home.

Mr. Speaker, we must increase the pressure on Syria, Iran and the Palestinian Authority and any other nation that has information regarding these prisoners. That is why I, along with the Gentleman from California, Mr. LANTOS, have led a coalition of members in sending a letter, which I will submit for publication in the CONGRESSIONAL RECORD, to the Secretary of State, urging him to raise this matter with Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara when he comes to Washington later this month.

Mr. Speaker, this nightmare has lasted long enough, it's time to bring Zachary Baumel and all of the other missing Israeli soldiers home.

CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES,

Washington, DC, June 7, 2002.

Secretary COLIN L. POWELL,
*U.S. Department of State,
Washington, DC.*

DEAR SECRETARY POWELL: Syrian Foreign Minister Farouk Shara is scheduled to meet with you in Washington, D.C. this week. You may be aware that his visit will coincide with the 20th anniversary of the capture of American citizen and Israeli soldier Zachary Baumel who, along with four other Israeli soldiers, was taken captive on June 11, 1982 during battles with Syrian forces near the Lebanese village of Sultan Ya'akub. We urge you to take advantage of the concurrence of these events to reinvigorate efforts to obtain information regarding the whereabouts of these and other missing Israeli soldiers, and to secure their release.

Since the founding of the State of Israel in 1948, more than four hundred Israeli soldiers have been declared "Missing in Action" (MIA). Only six of these cases are officially listed as "soldiers missing but presumed to be alive." Three of the soldiers: Zachary Baumel, Tzvi Feldman and Yehuda Katz

were captured in 1982. The fourth, Ron Arad, was captured in 1986. Recently, two more names were added to the list of the missing; on August 17, 1997, Guy Hever went missing from his army base in the Golan; on October 15, 2000, Hizbullah announced that another Israeli citizen, 54 year-old Elchanan Tannenbaum (Col. res.), had also been taken captive.

As you are no doubt aware, Public Law 106-89, authored by Congressman Lantos of California, directs the Department of State to raise the issue of missing Israeli soldiers with officials of Syria, Lebanon, the Palestinian Authority and other governments in the Middle East. It specifies that US aid to these governments should take into consideration their willingness to assist in locating and securing the return of these soldiers. It also directs the Department of State to report to Congress on these efforts. We hope that you will use the occasion of your meeting with Foreign Minister Shara to further the goals of Public Law 106-89.

If the Syrian government is to become a responsible member of the international community, it must take all necessary measures to provide the fullest possible accounting for Zachary Baumel and all other Israeli hostages held under Syrian control. We urge you to convey this message to the Syrian Foreign Minister and to redouble your efforts to secure the long overdue release of these soldiers.

Thank you for your consideration. We look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

Anthony D. Weiner; Tom Lantos, Benjamin A. Gilman; Henry A. Waxman; Janice D. Schakowsky; Eliot L. Engel; Carolyn B. Maloney; Nita M. Lowey; Gary L. Ackerman; Shelley Berkley; Jerrold Nadler; Robert Wexler; Barney Frank; Eric Cantor; James R. Langevin; Peter Deutsch; Howard L. Berman; Steve Israel; Tammy Baldwin; Joseph Crowley; Adam B. Schiff; Benjamin L. Cardin; Jim Saxton.