

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

September 28, 2018

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo:

As strong supporters of the United States' commitment to the dignity and security of Israelis and Palestinians, we write to urge the administration to reverse its decisions to end vital United States contributions to the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) and to reprogram bilateral foreign aid away from the West Bank and Gaza. While Hamas continues to act in complete disregard for the safety and freedom of the people of Gaza, the administration's steps will aggravate tensions in the region and further erode prospects for a lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians.

These steps not only threaten the stability of the region; they also undercut the U.S.'s ability to facilitate negotiations that will result in a viable two-state solution to the conflict. As we reflect on the 25 years since the Oslo Accords, we believe it is imperative that both sides of this conflict resume negotiations. However, the administration's decisions, whether or not intended to pressure Palestinian leadership back to the negotiating table, are counterproductive to facilitating negotiations or pursuing peace, stability, and security.

As you know, bilateral foreign assistance to the West Bank and Gaza and UNRWA contributions were appropriated by Congress on a bipartisan basis following extensive deliberation and debate. Unilaterally refusing to disburse this funding disregards Congress' constitutionally given power of the purse and the will of the American people, whom Congress was elected to represent. We, therefore, urge the administration to reverse its Fiscal Year (FY) 2017 funding decision and to obligate the FY 2018 aid as intended by Congress.

Bilateral assistance to the West Bank and Gaza improves Palestinians' quality of life and bolsters security in the region, which supports U.S. interests in a negotiated peace agreement. An August 2018 Government Accountability Office (GAO) study found that the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID), which is responsible for administering this assistance, was conducting the necessary vetting to ensure this funding was being spent for its intended purposes. But the administration's decision to reprogram \$230.1 million in assistance will cut funding for emergency food security to vulnerable families, including the elderly, the disabled, orphans, and women-headed households; education services; emergency healthcare preparedness; positive youth engagement; and urgent water and sanitation needs, among other vital programs, which undercuts U.S. interests in the region. Further, thousands of jobs will be lost as U.S. implementing partners on the ground will be forced to lay off employees, making a bad situation worse.

Included in the termination of FY 2017 bilateral aid was \$25 million for the East Jerusalem Hospital Network, which has consistently enjoyed bipartisan support. The East Jerusalem

Hospital Network provides critical specialized care and is the backbone of tertiary referral care for Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. This network of hospitals, including the Lutheran World Federation owned and operated Augusta Victoria Hospital, provides life-saving services such as cancer treatment, pediatric hemodialysis, and bone marrow transplants, as well as vocational training for thousands of students. Without FY 2017 assistance, these hospitals will have to curtail or cut services, leading to the interruption of current treatments, a reduction in future treatments, and a severe disruption to the health care system in the region.

Further, the administration most recently announced that it would exclude projects involving Palestinians from receiving any of the funds from the \$10 million USAID Conflict Management and Mitigation (CMM) grants program. CMM programs support people-to-people organizations that serve thousands of Israelis and Palestinians by building resilience against violence and strengthening the human capital for the next generation of leaders, laying the groundwork for a viable peace agreement. Eliminating these funds only serves to undercut the very forces for peace that we should be supporting.

Additionally, we are disturbed by the administration's decision to indefinitely withhold contributions to UNRWA, which will lead to disastrous consequences for Palestinians, Israelis, and others in the region. The administration's decision will exacerbate the already dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where one million people – half the population – depend on UNRWA for food assistance. We have heard from the humanitarian community that there is no entity with the capacity to replace UNRWA in Gaza, the West Bank, Jordan, Lebanon, and Syria, where it operates more than 700 schools for 500,000 children and 142 health clinics that served nine million patients in 2017. According to reports in the Israeli media, top Israeli military and intelligence officials have repeatedly warned that weakening UNRWA risks strengthening Hamas and endangering Israel's security. The administration's decisions also threaten to destabilize countries hosting refugee camps served by UNRWA, including our ally Jordan.

We urge you to reverse your decision and obligate appropriated FY 2017 funds intended for UNRWA and bilateral assistance to support Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza. Furthermore, it is imperative that the FY 2018 funds, for the same purposes, are obligated prior to September 30, 2019. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress

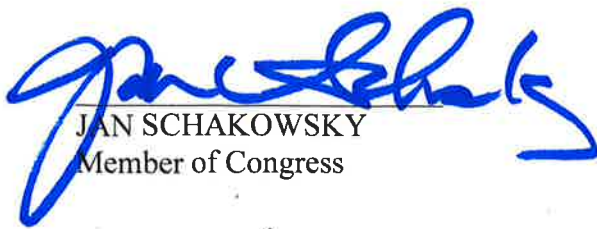


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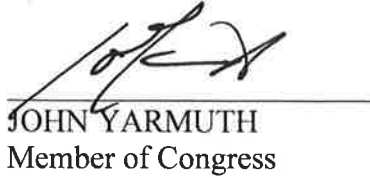


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Member of Congress

CC: Jared Kushner, Senior Advisor to the President
Jason Greenblatt, Assistant to the President
Mark Green, USAID Administrator
Nikki Haley, U.S. Ambassador to the United Nations
Karen Sasahara, U.S. Consul General
David Friedman, U.S. Ambassador to Israel

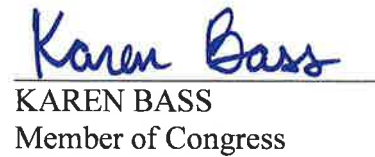

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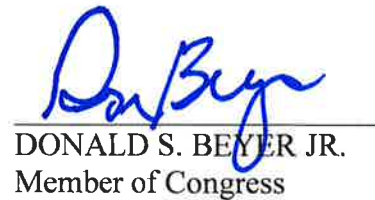

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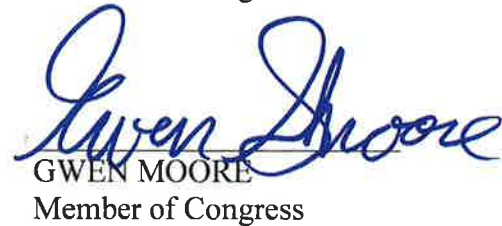

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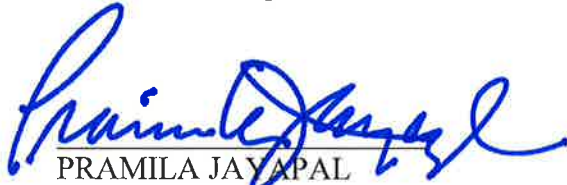

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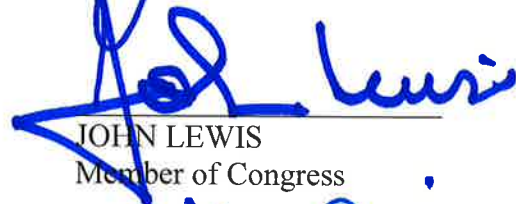

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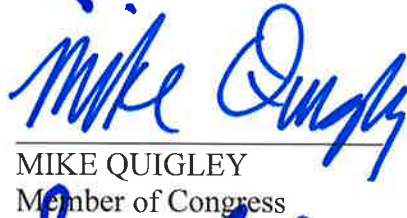

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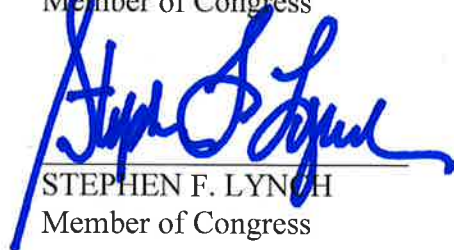

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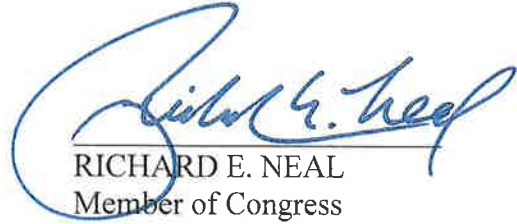
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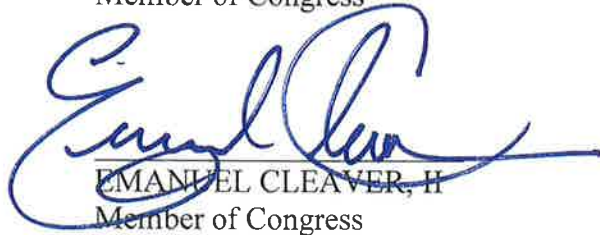
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