

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

February 8, 2018

President Donald J. Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President,

As strong supporters of the United States' commitment to the security of the State of Israel and the safety and dignity of Israelis and Palestinians alike, we write to urge you to continue vital US contributions to the United Nations Relief Works Agency (UNRWA) and bilateral assistance to the Palestinians. Continuing to freeze this aid will harm American interests by exacerbating the threats facing both peoples and reducing the United States' ability to help the Israelis and Palestinians reach a two-state solution.

Alongside robust and expanding US aid to Israel, Congress has regularly appropriated funds to help bolster Palestinian quality of life and governance, both bilaterally and through contributions to UNRWA, and security in the region. This assistance also helps to improve the lives of millions of children in the Palestinian territories, where more than 50 percent of children live below the poverty line.

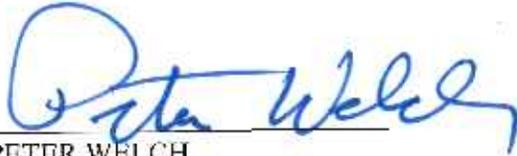
The Israeli Government deems UNRWA's work providing basic services and education to Palestinian refugees so consequential for Israeli security that it has reportedly weighed in with your administration in support of maintaining US contributions to the agency, despite frequent criticism of it. Former Israel Defense Forces (IDF) Spokesperson Lieutenant Colonel (ret.) Peter Lerner wrote this month, "By weakening UNRWA and, consequentially, the Palestinian population even further, without a real administrative alternative, I believe that Palestinians will be even more susceptible to extremism and violence. This will not contribute to security or stability in the region."

Similarly, US-funded projects to help meet the essential needs of the Palestinian people and strengthen institutions of Palestinian civil society help fight instability and corruption. This vital US assistance provides for the maintenance of security and stability for Israelis and Palestinians against attacks by extremist forces. As one Israeli security official said speaking on the condition of anonymity this month, "Cutting funding would not bring anything good to the situation. Doing this would end up making the Palestinian leadership even weaker."

The deterioration in the near-term prospects for progress toward a negotiated peaceful resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict would render a cut-off of US assistance all the more dangerous. Deliberately exacerbating the hardship of the Palestinian people and reducing the ability of their government to function would only contribute to the benefit of those who reject engagement. Extremist and anti-Israel groups would be all too eager to fill in the vacuum, deepening their hold in the region and expanding their destructive influence on the prospects for a peaceful resolution of the conflict.

Accordingly, we urge you to continue providing aid to UNRWA and bilateral assistance to the Palestinians to promote US interests, Israeli and Palestinian security, and the stability of regional US allies.

Sincerely,



PETER WELCH
Member of Congress



DAVID E. PRICE
Member of Congress



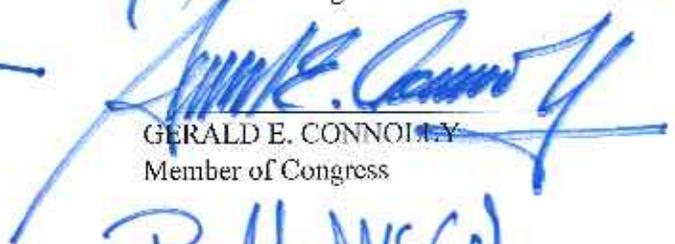
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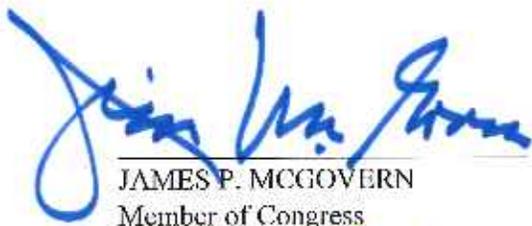
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EDDIE BERNICE JOHNSON
Member of Congress



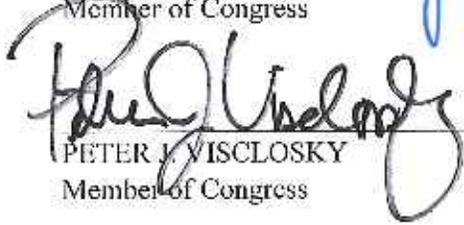
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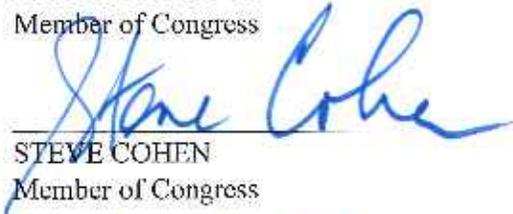
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Lisa Blunt Rochester

LISA BLUNT ROCHESTER
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Pete Aguilar

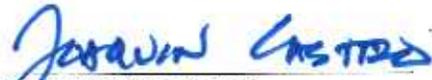
PETE AGUILAR
Member of Congress

Michael E. Capuano

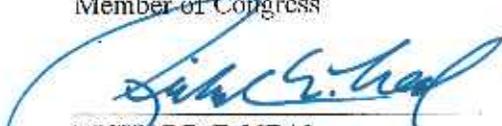
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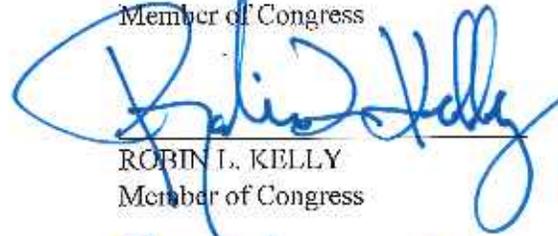

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