

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 3, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
United States Secretary of State
The State Department
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As you continue your second trip to Israel since the beginning of the Israel-Hamas conflict, we are encouraged by your recent remarks and share concerns about the ongoing humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. We commend President Biden and yourself for consistently reaffirming Israel's right to defend its citizens in the aftermath of Hamas' horrific October 7th attack, while emphasizing the United States' commitment to international law and the protection of Israeli and Palestinian civilians. With the humanitarian crisis in Gaza worsening by the hour, we urge you to emphasize the following priorities in order to protect innocent lives, regional stability, and American national security interests in the region.

Reiterate the Urgent Need for a Humanitarian Pause and Ensure Sufficient Flow of Humanitarian Aid:

We welcomed President Biden's recent call for a short-term cessation of hostilities, to allow for the distribution of humanitarian aid through verified sources and the safe release of all hostages. This is critical to meet the needs of the over 1.4 million displaced Gazans and over 200 Israelis and foreign nationals held in Gaza, including American citizens.

While we are encouraged by the ongoing negotiations that have allowed an increase in the humanitarian aid entering Gaza following intensive diplomatic engagements by the Biden Administration, we remain concerned that the incoming aid is insufficient to meet the needs of nearly 2.2 million civilians in Gaza, nearly half of whom are children. The restrictions imposed by the Israeli government have resulted in dire shortages of clean drinking water, fuel, electricity, medical supplies, and vital communication services, creating inhumane conditions and making humanitarian work extremely challenging. We ask that you press Israeli officials to work with Egyptian partners to meet the needs of the civilian population in Gaza, including the restoration and sustainment of reliable communication services, which are vital to humanitarian aid efforts.

Make Clear that Israel Must Conduct Military Operations Within the Scope of International Law and Minimize Civilian Harm:

As democracies, we must continue to hold ourselves and our closest allies to the highest standards of conduct, even at times of great tragedy and violence. While we firmly believe in Israel's right to defend itself, we are gravely concerned by Israel's military operation and conduct that fails to limit harm to non-combatants and vulnerable populations. Nearly 9,000 Palestinians have been killed, including over 3,600 children. Abiding by international law is not only morally

imperative, but also legally required per international humanitarian law, and strategically important to prevent regional escalation and preserve global support for Israel's response to Hamas' attack.

Press the Israeli Government to Prevent Further Settler Violence in the West Bank

As the Biden Administration has acknowledged, there has been a disturbing rise in Israeli settler attacks in the West Bank since the October 7th attack. Israeli human rights group Yesh Din has reported over 100 incidents of settler violence and harassment against Palestinians in the West Bank since the beginning of the war. The Biden Administration should demand that Israeli officials hold perpetrators accountable. Continued settler violence in the West Bank, including the eviction of Palestinians from their homes and destruction of their property, could expand the war to additional fronts, greatly exacerbating regional instability and endangering Israel's and the U.S.' national security. Furthermore, we remain gravely concerned that continued harassment, violence, and evictions of Palestinians in the West Bank may aid Hamas in their ongoing recruitment efforts. Reports that followed Hamas' rocket attacks on Israel in May of 2021 clearly illustrate their recruitment strategy as one that takes advantage of the personal grievances and frustrations of Palestinians being evicted from their homes.

Lay the Groundwork for Intensive Diplomacy Efforts to Achieve Sustainable Peace

While we are encouraged by the Biden Administration's intensive diplomatic efforts to address the ongoing crisis, we urge you to begin a focused and sustained effort toward a political resolution to the underlying and longstanding conflict. Working closely with the Israeli government and our partners in the region must be an immediate priority. Equally pressing is encouraging regional support for an independent state for the Palestinian people free from Hamas' rule and co-existing in peace with Israel. A long-term two-state solution is crucial for Palestinians' self-determination, to promote Israel's integration in the region, and to secure a peaceful future for both Israelis and Palestinians.

This conflict requires holistic U.S. leadership – addressing the grave humanitarian needs of today while working towards solutions that prioritize de-escalation, dialogue, and diplomacy. We commend your dedicated efforts during this conflict, and we remain committed to continued engagement.

Sincerely,



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



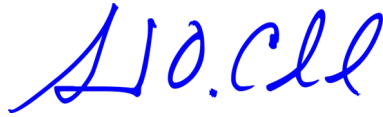
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress



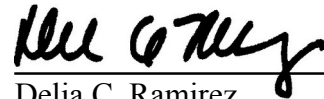
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Maxine Waters
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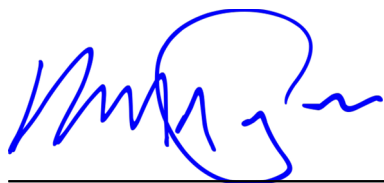
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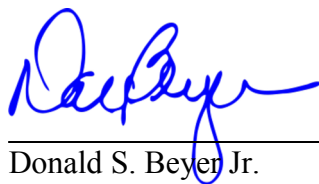
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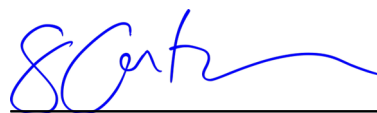
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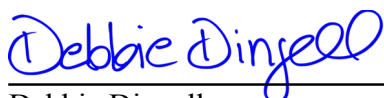
Gregorio Kilili Camacho
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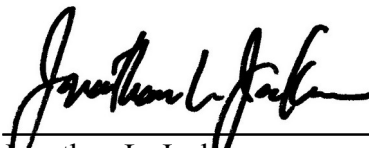
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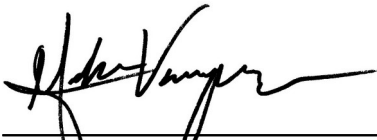
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Mark DeSaulnier
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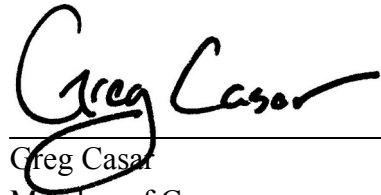
Donald M. Payne, Jr.
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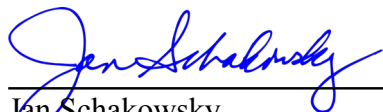
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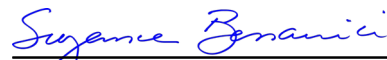
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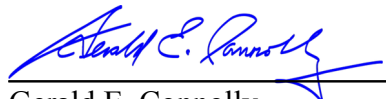
Suzanne Bonamici
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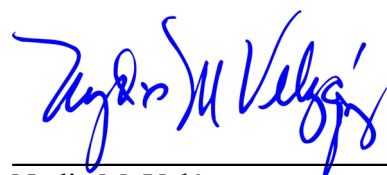
Gerald E. Connolly
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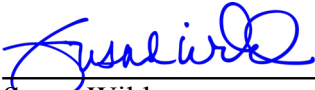
Chellie Pingree
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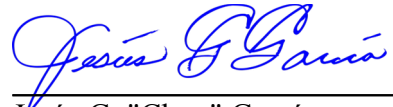
Troy Carter
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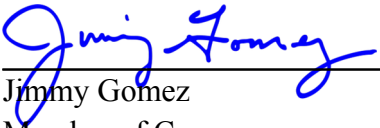
Nydia M. Velázquez
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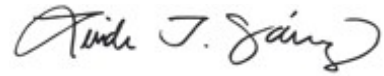
Susan Wild
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Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



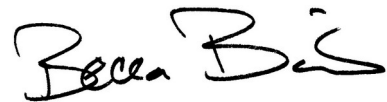
Jimmy Gomez
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Linda T. Sánchez
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Teresa Leger Fernández
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