



Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 12, 2021

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We would like to congratulate you on your confirmation as Secretary of State. We look forward to working with you and the entire Biden Administration to center human rights and international law as the guiding principles of our nation's foreign policy and diplomacy. We were pleased by the Administration's decision to end U.S. participation in offensive operations in Yemen and to suspend weapons sales to human rights abusing regimes such as Saudi Arabia and the United Arab Emirates. We view this move as a positive indication that human rights and international law will be the guiding principles of the Biden Administration's foreign policy.

As Members of Congress who are advocates for the human rights of the Palestinian people, we were deeply dismayed by your immediate predecessor's unwillingness to engage with us about our concerns related to U.S. policy toward Israel and Palestine. We look forward to establishing a new, mutually productive relationship with the State Department under your leadership that results in U.S. policy that supports the human rights and dignity of the Palestinian people.

Accordingly, we want to draw your attention to letters sent to your predecessor which were ignored. To the extent you are able within your applicable regulations, we kindly request a response to these letters in order to better inform our legislative and policy oversight functions.

We remain concerned about Israel's policy of demolishing Palestinian homes in the occupied West Bank, including East Jerusalem. We request that the State Department undertake an investigation into Israel's possible use of U.S. equipment in these home demolitions and determine whether these materials have been used in violation of the Arms Export Control Act or any U.S.-Israeli end use agreements. We believe the State Department should condemn Israel's home demolitions in unequivocal terms and take effective and timely diplomatic action to end this policy.

We are also concerned that Israel is abdicating its responsibility under the Fourth Geneva Convention to provide for public health measures in Occupied Palestinian Territory. Under sustained international

pressure, Israel has only recently agreed to provide a mere 5,000 COVID-19 vaccinations to Palestinians, far short of meeting the vaccine need. Israel has an obligation under international law to provide these vaccines to all Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation, including to the approximately 2 million Palestinians living in the besieged Gaza Strip, which has been under a brutal Israeli-Egyptian blockade for the past 14 years. Israel's blockade has decimated the public health sector in the Gaza Strip, which urgently needs humanitarian aid and vaccines to combat the pandemic.

We are encouraged by the Biden Administration's intent to restore bilateral U.S. humanitarian aid benefiting the Palestinian people and U.S. contributions to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), which provides services to Palestinian refugees. The Trump Administration's decision to end all forms of economic assistance to the Palestinian people was among the cruelest of the many anti-Palestinian policies it enacted. As the Biden Administration restores humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people, we also believe the State Department should publicly call on Israel to fulfill its legal obligation to provide vaccines to all Palestinians living under Israeli military occupation.

We also want to draw your attention to letters sent to the State Department protesting the Trump Administration's backing for Israel's unilateral annexation of Palestinian land. We are greatly heartened that the Biden Administration is opposed to Israeli annexation; however, Israel's ongoing colonization of the Palestinian West Bank, including East Jerusalem, alongside its demolition of Palestinian homes, is a form of ongoing, de facto annexation which needs to be unequivocally opposed by the United States. The message from this Administration must be clear: settler colonialism in any form—including Israel's settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank—is illegal under international law and will not be tolerated.

Lastly, we call upon the Biden Administration to officially rescind the Trump Administration's "Peace to Prosperity" plan, which would enable Israel to unilaterally annex 30 percent of the West Bank outside the framework of negotiations. We believe that the Biden Administration should officially take this plan off the table and make clear to Israel and the Palestinian people that no part of it will constitute the basis for any future U.S.-backed plan.

Below are the letters on these matters that Members of Congress sent to the State Department in 2020. We look forward to engaging with you and your department on these issues and receiving an expeditious reply since our repeated requests were ignored by your predecessor.

Home Demolitions

- **A House [letter from March](#)** penned by Reps. Khanna, Cohen, and Eshoo against home demolitions, signed by more than 60 members of Congress.
- **A House [letter from November](#)** penned by Rep. Pocan against home demolitions, signed by more than 40 members of Congress.

Humanitarian Aid / COVID-19

- **A Senate [letter from March](#)** penned by Senators Van Hollen and Warren supporting humanitarian aid to Palestinians during COVID-19, co-signed by six other Senators.

- A **House [letter](#) from March** penned by Representatives Pingree and Price supporting humanitarian aid to Palestinians during COVID-19, co-signed by 13 other members of Congress.
- A **House [letter](#) from April** penned by Representative Dingell calling for a resumption of humanitarian aid to Palestinians in the context of COVID-19, signed by 57 members.
- A **House [letter](#) from December** led by Rep. Tlaib on refunding UNRWA, signed by 54 members.

Annexation

- A **House [letter](#) from June** opposed to Israel’s annexation of the West Bank, signed by 191 members of Congress.
- A **Senate [letter](#) from June** opposed to Israel’s annexation of the West Bank, signed by 18 members of Congress.

Once again, we would like to thank you for the steps you have already taken to recenter America’s foreign policy in human rights and international law. We would also like to offer to meet with you and other officials from your State Department to further discuss our advocacy for the human rights of Palestinians and foster an open dialogue on this critical topic.

Sincerely,

RASHIDA TLAIB
Member of Congress

ANDRÉ CARSON
Member of Congress

HENRY C. “HANK” JOHNSON, JR.
Member of Congress

JAMES P. MCGOVERN
Member of Congress

ALEXANDRIA OCASIO-CORTEZ
Member of Congress

CHELLIE PINGREE
Member of Congress

MARK POCAN
Member of Congress

RAÚL GRIJALVA
Member of Congress

BETTY MCCOLLUM
Member of Congress

MARIE NEWMAN
Member of Congress

ILHAN OMAR
Member of Congress

AYANNA PRESSLEY
Member of Congress