

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

January 18, 2024

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

Dear Secretary Blinken:

We write to support the Biden administration's continued strong opposition to any consideration of the idea of forced transfer of Palestinians out of Gaza. We appreciate President Biden's clear commitment, in calls with Egyptian President Abdel Fattah Al-Sisi and Jordanian King Abdullah II, to ensure that Palestinians in Gaza will not be displaced to any other nation.¹ We also welcome Vice President Harris' assurance that "under no circumstances will the United States permit the forced relocation of Palestinians from Gaza or the West Bank, the besiegement of Gaza, or the redrawing of the borders of Gaza."² Additionally, we were glad to see you reiterate the administration's firm opposition to the forcible displacement of Palestinians during a recent press conference in Doha.³

We urge you to continue to reiterate the United States' firm commitment to this position and ask that you provide clarification regarding certain provisions of the administration's supplemental humanitarian and security funding request. Any forced expulsion of Palestinians from Gaza would only exacerbate the trauma and pain Palestinian civilians in Gaza are already experiencing as a result of this conflict and cause more regional tension and conflict for decades to come.

We have serious concerns both about extremist rhetoric from some Israeli officials and about proposals being floated by some in the Israeli government for the transfer of Palestinian civilians out of Gaza. For instance, the Israeli Ministry of Intelligence, in a document dated October 13, 2023, proposed the forcible and permanent transfer of 2.3 million Palestinians in Gaza to Egypt's Sinai Peninsula.⁴ The document understandably raised fears among Palestinians of permanent displacement from Gaza. These fears were exacerbated by a report in November that the Israeli government "has quietly tried to build international support in recent weeks for the transfer of several hundred thousand civilians from Gaza to Egypt for the duration of its war."⁵ Continued extremist rhetoric by Israeli government officials, such as calling for "Nakba 2023," is also

¹ *Readout of President Biden's Call with His Majesty King Abdullah II of Jordan*, WHITE HOUSE, (October 2023)
<https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/31/readout-of-president-bidens-call-with-his-majesty-king-abdullah-ii-of-jordan-2/>

² *Harris says US will 'under no circumstances' permit forced relocation of Palestinians*, CNN, (December, 2023)
<https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/02/politics/harris-cop28-israel-gaza/index.html>

³ *U.S. Opposes Displacement of Palestinians, Blinken Says*, REUTERS, (January, 2024)
<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/blinken-presses-arab-states-discuss-future-gaza-2024-01-07/>

⁴ *An Israeli ministry, in a 'concept paper,' proposes transferring Gaza civilians to Egypt's Sinai*, ASSOCIATED PRESS, (October, 2023)
<https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-population-transfer-hamas-egypt-palestinians-refugees-5f99378c0af6aca183a90c631fa4da5a>

⁵ *Israel Quietly Pushed for Egypt to Admit Large Numbers of Gazans*, NEW YORK TIMES, (November, 2023)
<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/05/world/middleeast/israel-egypt-gaza.html>

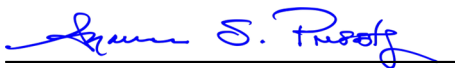
deeply alarming and further heightens concerns that some members of the Israeli government support forcibly transferring Palestinians out of Gaza.⁶

Due to the ongoing conflict, over 1.8 million Palestinians in Gaza, nearly 80% of the population, have been internally displaced in the Gaza Strip. Worsening sanitary conditions, shortages of food, water, fuel, and medicines, and thousands of cases of acute respiratory infections, diarrhea and chicken pox reflect an increasingly dire humanitarian crisis.⁷ The Israeli government must urgently increase the amount of humanitarian aid entering the Gaza Strip in order to address this humanitarian catastrophe. If Palestinian civilians choose to leave Gaza voluntarily in search of safety, they must be guaranteed to be allowed to return. Many in Gaza fear that any temporary displacement would become permanent. The United States must ensure that there is no question that Palestinian civilians who wish to remain in the Gaza Strip have the right to do so.

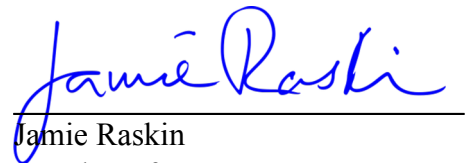
In light of these concerns, we are also seeking clarity around President Biden's supplemental humanitarian and security funding request transmitted to Congress on October 20, which asks for funding to "address potential needs of Gazans fleeing to neighboring countries."⁸ In light of the President's recognition of the importance of preventing Palestinian displacement, we aim to prevent any confusion or misinterpretation that this funding request could in any way signal U.S. support for potential transfer of Palestinians out of the Gaza Strip. We ask for a clarification of the U.S. position on this question and that you continue to make clear American opposition to any forced transfer of population to both the Israeli government and the Palestinian people.

The United States must remain committed, as you have stated on many occasions, to a future in which all Israelis and Palestinians live in peace with equal rights, dignity, and freedom. We thank you for your time and consideration, and we look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

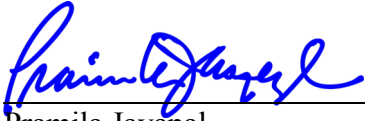


Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

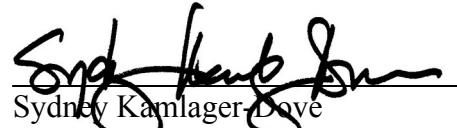
⁶ 'Erase Gaza': War Unleashes Incendiary Rhetoric in Israel, NEW YORK TIMES, (November, 2023) <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/15/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-war-rhetoric.html>; *Israel's Ben-Gvir: 'Voluntary' Transfer of Gazans Is the Solution, Israelis Should Resettle Strip*, HAARETZ, (January 2024), <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/2024-01-07/ty-article/ben-gvir-voluntary-transfer-of-gazans-is-the-solution-israelis-should-re-settle-strip/0000018c-e2f0-d751-ad8d-fff4fb4d0000>

⁷ *Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel – OCHA Flash Update #52*, UNITED NATIONS, (November, 2023) <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/hostilities-in-the-gaza-strip-and-israel-ocha-flash-update-52/>

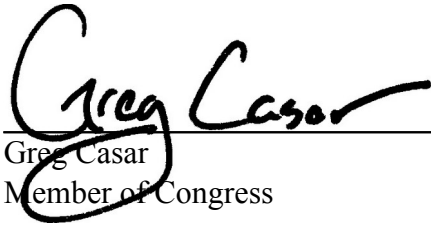
⁸ *Letter regarding critical national security funding needs for FY 2024*, WHITE HOUSE, (October, 2023) <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2023/10/Letter-regarding-critical-national-security-funding-needs-for-FY-2024.pdf>



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Sydney Kamlager-Dove
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Barbara Lee
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
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Jesus G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



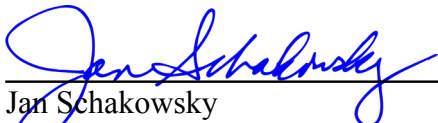
Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Mike Thompson
Member of Congress



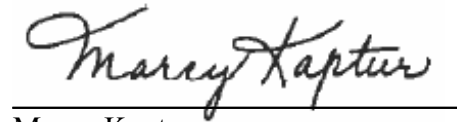
Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Jil Tokuda
Member of Congress



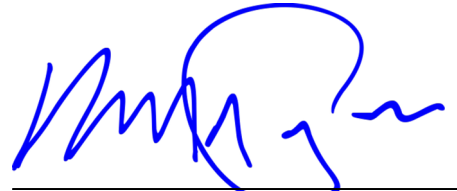
Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress



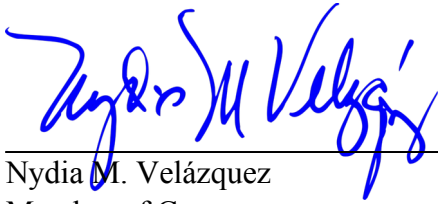
Marcy Kaptur
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Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress



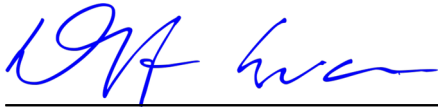
Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



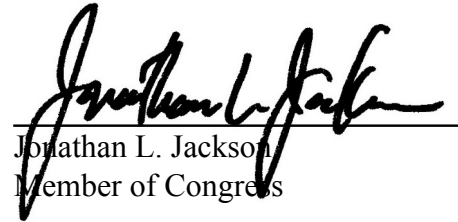
Dwight Evans
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Donald S. Beyer Jr.
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Paul D. Tonko
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Jonathan L. Jackson
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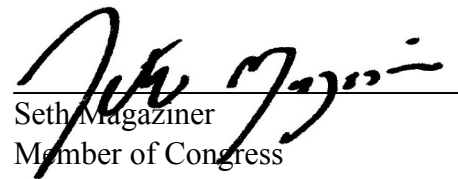
André Carson
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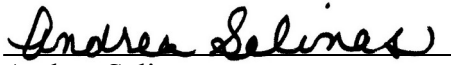
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



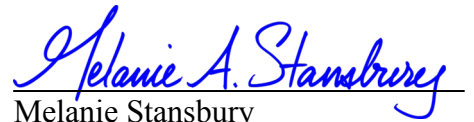
Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
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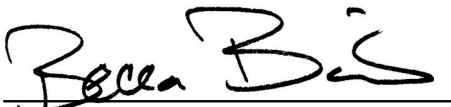
Seth Magaziner
Member of Congress



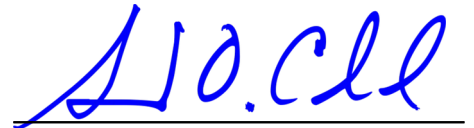
Andrea Salinas
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Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress



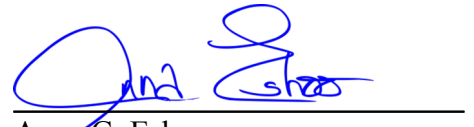
Becca Balint
Member of Congress



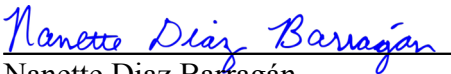
Salud Carbajal
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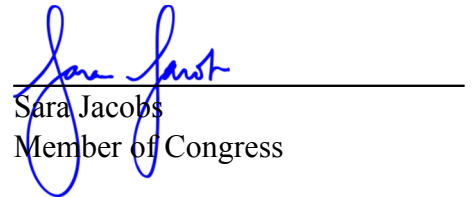
Bonnie Watson Coleman
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Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress



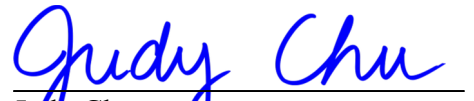
Nanette Diaz Barragán
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Sara Jacobs
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Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress



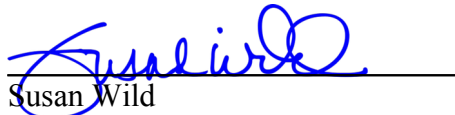
Judy Chu
Member of Congress



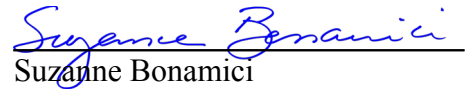
Tony Cardenas
Member of Congress



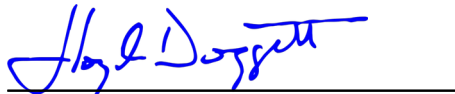
Steve Cohen
Member of Congress



Susan Wild
Member of Congress



Suzanne Bonamici
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Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



Rick Larsen
Member of Congress



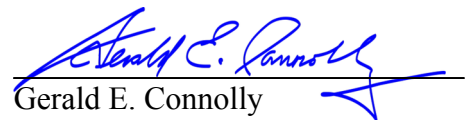
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



Ami Bera, M.D.
Member of Congress



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly
Member of Congress



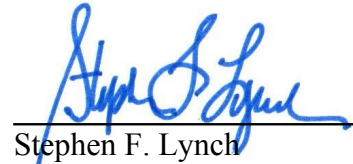
Cori Bush
Member of Congress



Mike Quigley
Member of Congress



Al Green
Member of Congress
Scion of the Enslaved Africans -
Sacrificed to Make America Great



Stephen F. Lynch
Member of Congress



Doris Matsui
Member of Congress