

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

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

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our concerns regarding the unfolding humanitarian situation in Gaza as Israel responds to Hamas' terrorist attack. We unequivocally condemn Hamas' shocking and horrifying terrorist attack on Israel. This is the worst perpetration of violence inflicted on the Jewish people since the Holocaust. Our hearts are with those who were tragically killed and their loved ones who mourn their loss. We also continue to hope for the safe return of those who were taken hostage by Hamas, including American citizens, and stand ready to support your Administration in bringing them home.

As efforts are made to rescue hostages, we urge those carrying out military operations to follow international humanitarian law and protect innocent civilian lives on both sides. We strongly agree with the President's sentiment that, "democracies like Israel and the United States are stronger and more secure when we act according to the rule of law."¹ We are deeply concerned about the order to evacuate over a million civilians out of northern Gaza in 24 hours and the devastating humanitarian consequences that would ensue. We are also deeply concerned by the recent comments from Israel Defense Forces leaders that call for a "complete siege," of the Gaza Strip. As both the European Union High Representative for Foreign Affairs and the United Nations Commission on Human Rights said, imposing a complete siege on Gaza and depriving 2.3 million Palestinian civilians who have nowhere else to go—half of whom are children²—of food, water, and electricity, would be a violation of international humanitarian law.

As President Biden has previously stated, Israel has the right to defend its people and respond to these vicious attacks, which have taken more than 1,300 lives and wounded over 3,000 more

¹ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2023/10/10/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-terrorist-attacks-in-israel-2/>

² <https://www.prb.org/resources/the-west-bank-and-gaza-a-population-profile/>

people.³ We strongly believe that Israel's response must take into account the millions of innocent civilians in Gaza who themselves are victims of Hamas and are suffering the consequences of their terror campaign. The most recent reporting indicates that already more than 423,000 people have been displaced across the Gaza Strip and over 1,500 have been killed—many of them civilians, including more than 500 children.⁴

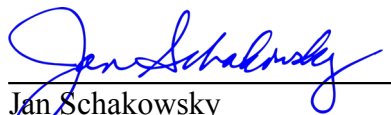
To that end, we urge you to take the following priorities into account:


1. Communicate that Israel's response in Gaza must be carried out according to international law and take all due measures to limit harm to innocent civilians;
2. Work to quickly restore the delivery of food, water, fuel, electricity, and other life-saving necessities to Gaza to ensure that innocent civilians have the basics needed for survival;
3. Collaborate with regional partners to establish a humanitarian corridor to enable the delivery of such life-saving necessities and to allow Palestinian civilians and foreign nationals, including U.S. citizens, to seek safe haven outside of Gaza;
4. Publicly discourage any hate crimes and backlash against any American—including Jews and Muslims—including by communicating to the American people that Hamas is not the Palestinian people and the Palestinian people are not Hamas; and
5. Ensure that supplemental funding requests to Congress include humanitarian assistance for both Palestinians in Gaza and Israelis.

However this current conflict plays out, we feel strongly that the US government and the global community must continue the tough work to achieve lasting peace in the region. The future and safety of Israelis and Palestinians are intertwined. We cannot achieve lasting peace and security for Israelis without addressing the humanitarian crises in Gaza and the West Bank.

Thank you for the work your Administration is doing to respond to this crisis, provide support to our ally Israel, and bring American citizens home safely. We must do everything possible going forward to work for peace in the region that will bring an end to these ceaseless cycles of violence and suffering among Israelis and Palestinians. We greatly appreciate your attention to these stated priorities, and stand ready to be of assistance to your Administration.


Sincerely,


Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress


Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

³ <https://www.wsj.com/livecoverage/israel-hamas-war-gaza-strip/card/latest-death-toll-in-israel-and-gaza-eoVPF18WcXN0mzIR73pY>

⁴ <https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-news-hamas-war-10-13-23/index.html>; https://edition.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-news-hamas-war-10-12-23/h_54f26f610d55f045250db1112895a37f



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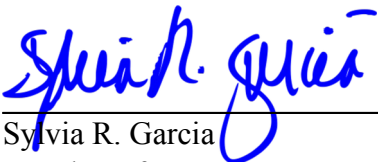
Eleanor Holmes Norton
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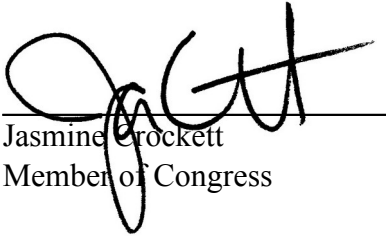
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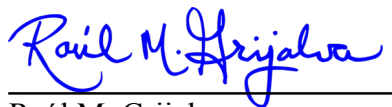
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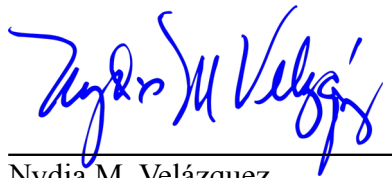
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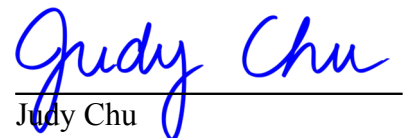
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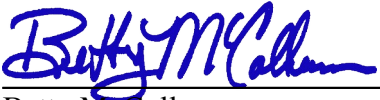
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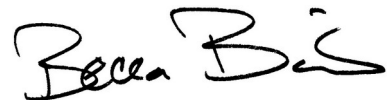
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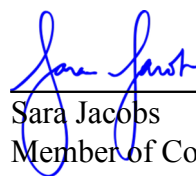
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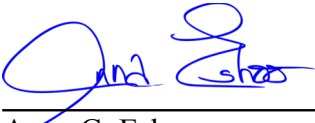
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