

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2014

The Honorable John F. Kerry
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

The recent conflict between Israel and Hamas has seen the latter's cynical and illegal use of human shields and the placement of its rocket launchers, weapons caches and other terrorist infrastructure within densely populated civilian areas. It is within this context that we are gravely concerned to learn of the repeated use of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) facilities to maintain rocket stockpiles during the course of the conflict. We strongly condemn these actions.

According to news reports and press releases by the United Nations (UN), on July 16, July 22, and again on July 29, rockets were found during the course of inspections of UNRWA schools in Gaza. Of further concern, UN officials said the rockets found on July 16 were turned over to local authorities answerable to the Palestinian unity government, though it's unclear what formal powers this entity has in Gaza. With regard to the rockets found on July 16, the cache subsequently went missing, presumably returned to terrorist hands.

We appreciate UNRWA's important role in providing humanitarian, social services, education and other forms of assistance in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Furthermore, we note Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's condemnation of the rocket incidents, UNRWA's ongoing investigation into their placement in these schools, and changes in protocol that have subsequently been adopted.

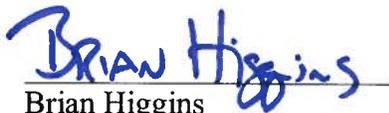
However, as the largest single-state contributor to UNRWA, providing \$294 million in Fiscal Year 2013, the United States has a responsibility to ensure that UNRWA facilities and personnel are not being used to perpetrate or facilitate acts of terrorism. We must ensure that United States taxpayer funds are not exploited for these nefarious purposes.

While we do not advocate a cutoff in funding at this time, these issues must be addressed. That is why we urge the State Department to conduct an independent investigation, while acknowledging the limitations imposed by the situation on the ground, to ascertain the extent to which UNRWA facilities are being misused in Gaza.

We also believe screening of staff for membership in Hamas and Hezbollah, both US designated foreign terrorist organizations, must be more effective going forward. Furthermore, site inspections by Operations Support Officers (OSO) should be increased in Gaza.

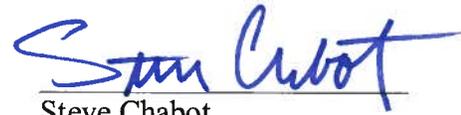
While we recognize UNRWA does not possess policing capabilities, or the ability to counter armed intruders, it must do more to prevent its facilities from being used to endanger the lives of civilians and commit acts of terrorism. Consequently, as the agency overseeing UNRWA contributions, the State Department is responsible for ensuring these funds are being used in a manner consistent with their humanitarian purpose. We therefore urge swift action to facilitate an independent investigation and ensure that UNRWA implements the necessary reforms to certify such incidents will not happen again.

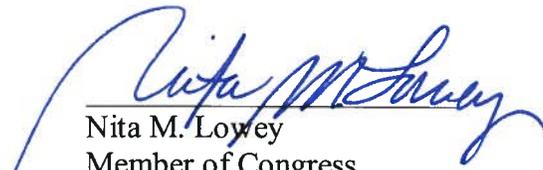
Sincerely,


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress


Doug Collins
Member of Congress


Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress


Steve Chabot
Member of Congress


Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress


Mark Meadows
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Steve Israel
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

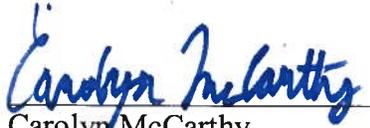
Bill Johnson
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James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



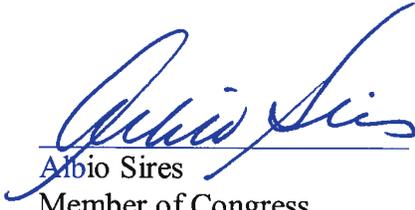
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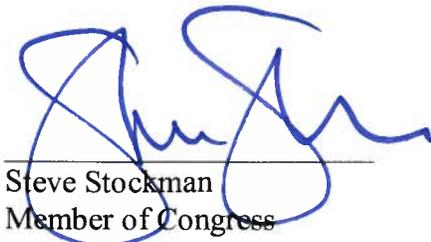
David N. Cicilline
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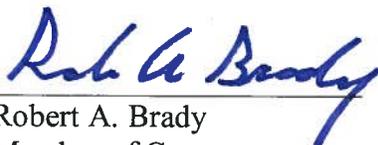
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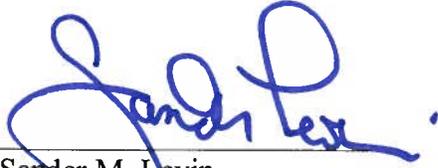
Curt Clawson
Member of Congress



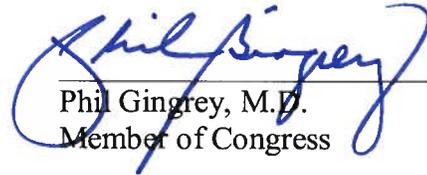
Frederica S. Wilson
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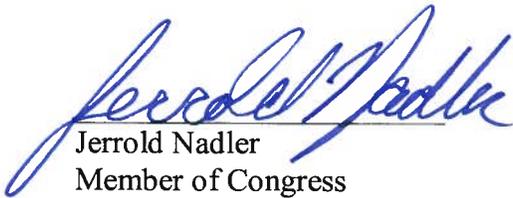
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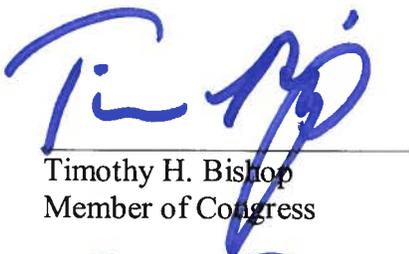
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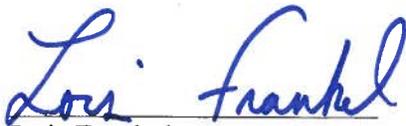
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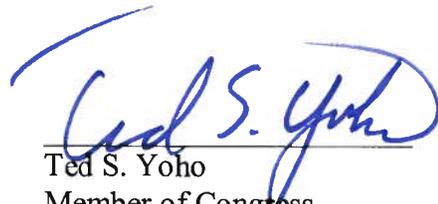
Rush Holt
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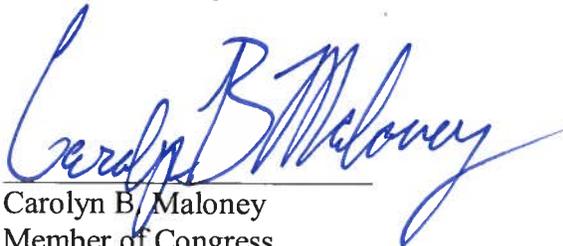
Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
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Dan Maffei
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Robert E. Latta
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Carolyn B. Maloney
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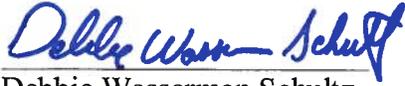
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Mark Takano
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Michael G. Grimm
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Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress