

# Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

July 20, 2018

Secretary of State  
Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to share our strong interest in ensuring that the State Department continues its efforts to promote the protection and proper treatment of children on both sides of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

As Members of Congress who remain committed to Israel's security and a viable two-state solution, we are deeply concerned by the all too prevalent reality of Israeli and Palestinian children living in fear. The special relationship between the United States and Israel is rooted in our shared values of democracy, human rights, and the rule of law. To support this relationship, the United States must promote policies that create conditions on the ground that engender mutual respect and compliance with international conventions and norms—particularly relating to human rights and the treatment of children.

We are particularly concerned by troubling reports of mistreatment of Palestinian children in Israeli custody. Just last year, UNICEF released a Humanitarian Situation Report, which stated that “child arrests and detention frequently occur in East Jerusalem.” For example, the report found that 200 children were either arrested or detained by Israeli authorities in East Jerusalem between July and September 2017, and 182 children were either arrested or detained in the three months prior. There are also numerous instances of Palestinian youth suffering from mistreatment in the West Bank, with estimates of 500 to 700 Palestinian children between the ages of 12 and 17 are being held in Israeli military detention facilities each year. These children are often held indefinitely without charge or trial, denied access to a lawyer or parent, or prosecuted in a military court system that lacks certain due process safeguards compared to civilian courts. While Israeli authorities have a right and obligation to prevent acts of violence by minors and apprehend those responsible, the current practice of arresting and detaining minors goes well beyond that legitimate purpose.

Previously, the Israeli government committed to working with UNICEF to address these concerns. As UNICEF detailed in the February 2015 update of its “Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations” report, possible reforms included issuing new military orders and taking steps to reinforce existing military and police standard operation procedures. However, documentation of continued mistreatment of children in custody indicates that furthers steps are necessary to fully address the issue.

As we express our concerns about the treatment of Palestinian children in detention, we are also united in our continued willingness to work with you on constructive steps to counter terrorist activity and violence toward Israelis. We reaffirm our steadfast commitment to providing necessary security assistance to Israel that saves the lives of innocent civilians from terrorism and rocket attacks. And we remain convinced that two states for two peoples—a democratic, Jewish state of Israel and a viable Palestinian state—living side-by-side in peace, security, and mutual recognition is the only sustainable solution to provide a dignified, just, and stable future for Israelis and Palestinians.

Israel is and will remain one of the United States’ closest friends and allies. As we continue to engage with Israel on a host of issues, and as we work to strengthen the prospects for peace, we encourage the State Department to stress the importance of ensuring proper treatment of Palestinian children in Israeli detention and address this matter in the Department’s next report on global human rights.

Sincerely,



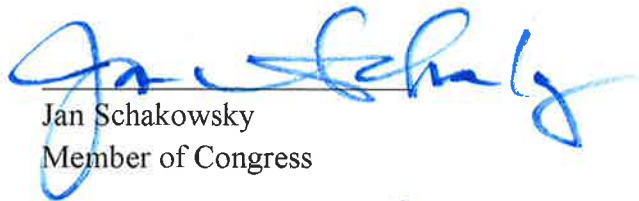
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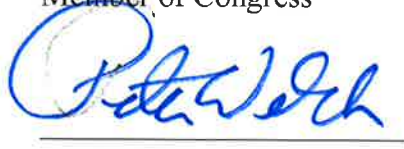
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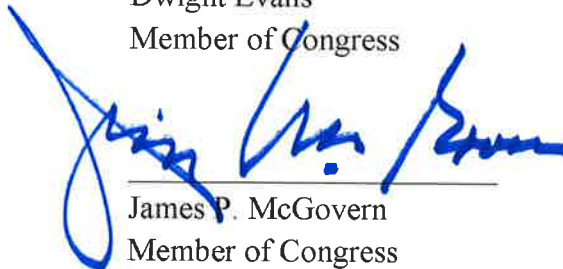
  
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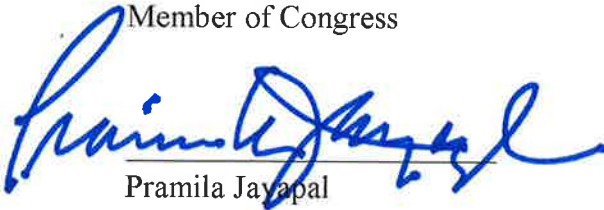
  
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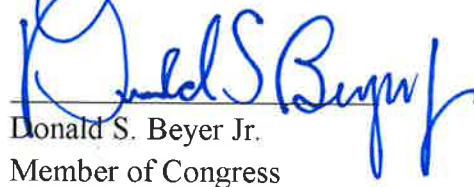
  
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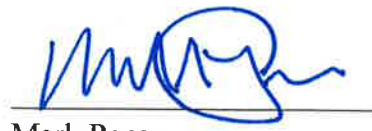
  
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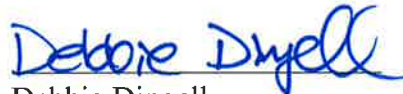
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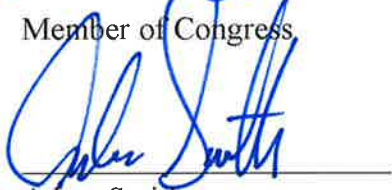
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