

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 8, 2023

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

Dear President Biden:

We have joined you in condemning the brutal terror attacks that Hamas conducted against Israel and agree with you that Israel has the right to defend itself and hold Hamas accountable. We applaud your actions to secure the release of two American citizens held hostage and support your continued efforts to free the remaining hostages. In the days and weeks since these attacks, you have rightly demonstrated America's commitment to support Israel in this dark hour.

The attacks of October 7th brought back chilling memories of the United States' own confrontation with terror twenty-two years ago. In light of our own experience, we want to underscore how critical it is that Israel: (1) learn from the mistakes the United States made in our fight against terrorism by focusing on realistic and achievable military goals; and (2) abide by the laws of war, including the protection of civilians. Doing so also offers Israel the very best chance of success against Hamas in the days and weeks ahead. These steps are also necessary to create the conditions for a lasting peace, including two states for two peoples.

We believe the United States should immediately provide Israel with the funding it needs to replenish its defensive systems, including Iron Dome and other air defense capabilities. But to better understand the efficacy of U.S. funding that supports Israel's operations inside Gaza, we respectfully ask your team to provide us with information relative to these two clear U.S. priorities: supporting an Israeli strategy that will effectively degrade and defeat the threat from Hamas and taking all possible measures to protect civilians in Gaza.

First, it is in America's interest to ensure that any military plans to fight Hamas do not produce the same strategic mistakes as many U.S. military operations over the past few decades. As we review the Administration's supplemental request for military assistance to Israel, we respectfully ask that you share with us your assessment of the viability of Israel's military strategy in Gaza, and whether it prioritizes the release of hostages. We would also like to better understand whether there is an achievable plan for governing Gaza when the Israeli military operation ends. We further seek to understand if Israel supports the conditions necessary to ultimately achieve a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Second, we ask you to inform us about what specific mechanisms you are putting in place to ensure that Israeli military operations conducted inside Gaza are carried out in accordance with international humanitarian law and to ensure that any U.S.-provided equipment is used in a manner consistent with U.S. law. Relatedly, we would like to know your assessment of whether Israel's military rules of engagement, particularly regarding mitigation of civilian casualties, align with U.S. policy and

practice. In addition, to prevent another front from opening in the West Bank, we ask that you obtain public assurances from Prime Minister Netanyahu that his coalition government will immediately stop the escalating extremist settler violence directed against unprotected Palestinians there, as well as assurances from President Abbas that his government take steps to quell any violence against Israelis.

Finally, we request information on how our assistance will advance our efforts to engage with Israel, Egypt, and the broader international community to address the ongoing humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. As we consider additional military assistance to Israel, we must not only do our part to provide urgently needed humanitarian relief to Gaza, but also insist that Israel take all necessary measures to help us facilitate such relief to the two million civilians living there, half of them children. That includes fully restoring water, electricity, and communication services, expediting fuel deliveries through already well-established systems for avoiding diversion to Hamas, and opening the Kerem Shalom crossing in southern Israel to increase urgently needed humanitarian relief to Gaza. Aid workers and civilian sites like schools, hospitals, and UN facilities must be protected.

We support additional assistance to Israel that: 1) aligns with an Israeli strategy that you believe will effectively degrade and defeat the threat from Hamas; 2) prioritizes the release of hostages; 3) advances a viable and achievable military plan that supports a long-term vision for peace, security and Palestinian self-determination in the form of a two-state solution; 4) abides by U.S. and international law, including the protection of civilians; and 5) advances efforts to provide desperately needed humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. The information requested in this letter will help us assure that U.S support for Israel's operations inside Gaza achieves these objectives.

Mr. President, your leadership at this time of crisis has been vital. We appreciate your attention to these urgent matters.

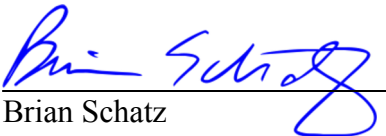
Sincerely,



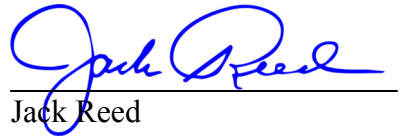
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator



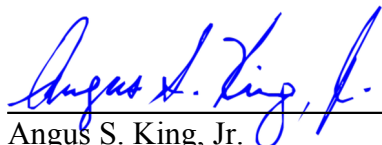
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Jack Reed
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



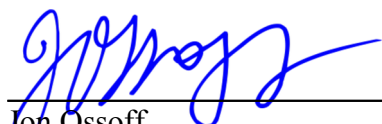
Tina Smith
United States Senator



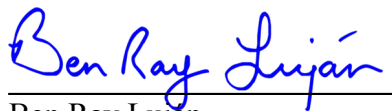
Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator



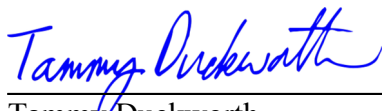
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator



Jon Ossoff
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



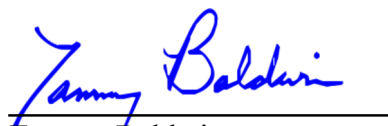
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Thomas R. Carper
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



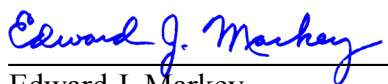
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



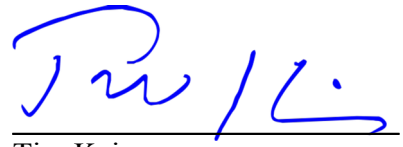
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

/s/

Laphonza Butler
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator