

February XX, 2021

Dear President Biden,

We write today encouraging you to build upon the solid partnership that currently exists between the United States and Israel. We sincerely hope you will strengthen the strong relationship the previous administration worked so diligently to achieve, and maintain the historical progress that was made on the path to lasting peace in the Middle East.

In 2015, you stated that “Israel is absolutely essential—absolutely essential—[for the] security of Jews around the world ... Imagine what it would say about humanity and the future of the 21st century if Israel were not sustained, vibrant and free.” We couldn’t agree more, and we hope your administration will back up your words with policy actions and personnel appointments reflecting this view.

Unfortunately, recent statements from your administration indicating your intention to resume aid to the Palestinian Authority are concerning. State Department Spokesman Ned Price recently said, “The suspension of aid to the Palestinian people has neither produced political progress nor secured concessions from the Palestinian leadership. It has only harmed innocent Palestinians.” This statement is alarming, given the fact that over \$350 million of the Palestinian Authority’s annual budget is dedicated to funding pensions for terrorists who murder Jews.

In 2018, the Taylor Force Act was signed into law conditioning U.S. Aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA) on their termination of “pay-to-slay” programs. It is shocking that we must debate whether or not U.S. taxpayer dollars will be sent to an organization that pays stipends to those who murder Jews in cold blood, with the incentive being the more Jews murdered the greater the reward. This will be paid to the murderer for the rest of their life, or to their family in the event of their death during execution of their crime.

Your administration, should it seek to restore payments of any kind to the PA, must ensure that the Palestinians are not paying stipends to terrorists. The State Department Report authorized by the Taylor Force Act indicates that the Palestinian Authority remains eager to continue their payments to the murderers of innocent civilians. Money is fungible by definition. No U.S. taxpayer dollars should flow to any Palestinian organization so long as that organization is incentivizing and rewarding cold-blooded murder.

Additionally, we are concerned by the ramifications of your appointment of both Robert Malley and Maher Bitar to the important positions of Special Envoy to Iran and Director for Intelligence on the National Security Council, respectively.

Mr. Malley is known to have and maintain friendly relationships with members of Hamas, a U.S State Department-designated terrorist organization. He has stated that he intends to “walk back parts of the normalization deals” sealed by the signing of the Abraham Accords. If the goal in the region truly is peace, why would we tap negotiators whose goal is to undo a peace agreement between Israel and some of her Sunni Gulf neighbors? America needs a negotiator trusted by all parties involved, not just the Iranians. Mr. Malley is not the man for the job. We also share strong concerns that he may even have violated the Logan Act when he met with Iran Foreign Minister Mohammad Javad Zarif at the UN in 2019.

As for Mr. Bitar, his track record is one of promoting and supporting the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement. Notably, in his master's thesis at Oxford University, he wrote on "Nakba," the Arabic word for disaster – referring to the creation of the State of Israel. The U.S. and Israel has enjoyed a strong intelligence-sharing relationship based on mutual trust. Mr. Bitar's spot as intelligence gatekeeper would hamstring Israel's trust in our utilization of shared intelligence for our relationship's best interests. We cannot allow this to happen.

We are dismayed by Mr. Malley's and Mr. Bitar's blatant anti-Israel bias, which obviously goes against the pro-Israel agenda your administration is promoting. In the interest of avoiding harm to our relationship with Israel and the flow of intelligence between our countries, we strongly urge you to reconsider the appointments of these top officials to these posts.

With these specific priorities in mind, we urge you to maintain and strengthen the close relationship we have with Israel. Any deviation from the current trajectory of our partnership would dramatically undermine the historic progress towards peace in the Middle East that has been made in recent years. We are hopeful your administration will avoid the tragic foreign policy mistakes made by previous administrations with a "blame Israel first" approach to managing the Israel/Palestinian conflict. It has been clearly demonstrated that such an approach will only end in failure, while standing up for our dear friend Israel can lead to significant positive changes that benefit all parties.

President Biden, we urge you to recognize the importance of the U.S. relationship with Israel. We are eager to see your words supported by policy actions and personnel decisions and we stand ready to work with you to that end.

Sincerely,

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress