

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 18, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Kerry,

We were pleased to see that Hamas finally accepted an Egyptian cease-fire plan last month. Sadly, Hamas continued its attacks on Israel for weeks after Egypt's initial proposal, leading to unnecessary and increased suffering in Gaza and Israel.

As we look ahead to the next few months, we urge you to focus on three key objectives: (1) preventing Hamas from rebuilding its military capabilities; (2) enabling the Palestinian Authority to move toward becoming the Palestinian governing authority in Gaza; and (3) preventing negative developments at the UN General Assembly, UN Human Rights Council, and the International Criminal Court that could derail any prospects for the resumption of peace talks between Israel and the Palestinians.

First, we fully support the urgent provision of humanitarian assistance to the people of Gaza. We must also condition reconstruction assistance on the establishment of a system to prevent Hamas from rearming and rebuilding its military capability. In the past, Hamas has diverted construction materials intended for civilian use to the construction of the tunnel networks that were used during this last conflict to smuggle weapons and attack Israelis. We must support Israeli and Egyptian efforts to implement strict, comprehensive controls so that no assistance is diverted to Hamas and other terrorist groups in Gaza. The international community has twice spent billions to rebuild Gaza, only to see Hamas transform economic assistance into the means of war. For the sake of Israelis and Palestinians alike, we cannot let this happen again. Ultimately, we must seek Gaza's demilitarization.

Second, we must support efforts to enable the Palestinian Authority to exercise real power in Gaza. Hamas has demonstrated conclusively both that it has no interest in peace with Israel and that it has no concern for the well-being of Gaza residents. Meanwhile, the West Bank has experienced periods of significant relative economic growth and stability, in part due to cooperation between Israeli and Palestinian security forces there. All Palestinians deserve a government that will seek to advance their safety and prosperity—not use them as human shields. Real peace between Israelis and Palestinians will require a Palestinian partner that controls the West Bank and Gaza, is focused on economic development and stability in both areas, and will accept Gaza's demilitarization. We must start this process now.

Third, while we work with the Palestinian Authority to extend its effective jurisdiction to Gaza, we must work equally hard to ensure that Palestinian officials do not take further harmful steps at the UN General Assembly, the UN Human Rights Council, or the International Criminal

Court. The Palestinian Authority must avoid steps that would undermine the resumption of Israeli-Palestinian negotiations. We must let Palestinian Authority President Abbas know that America's willingness to cooperate with him will continue to depend on his willingness to return to the negotiating table with the Government of Israel and avoid unilateral measures that bypass direct negotiations.

We look forward to working with you on these critical matters, as our nation strives both to prevent another Hamas-instigated war and to create the conditions that will allow Israelis and Palestinians to move closer to peace.

Sincerely,

Kelly A. Ayotte
United States Senator

Robert P. Casey, Jr.
United States Senator
