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August 3, 2020

Dear Friend,

Thank you for writing to me and sharing your concerns regarding recent developments impacting Israel. I value our relationship with the State of Israel and appreciate your thoughts and insight on current discussions. The United States enjoys a historical and deep relationship with the country, rooted in shared Democratic values.

During my time in Congress, I have been a consistent supporter of continuing our strong partnership. This includes my support for the security assistance to Israel promised under the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which commits \$38 billion over the course of 10 years. Most recently, I was supportive of H.R. 1837, which provided security funds, cybersecurity cooperation and other cooperative projects. Our MOU with Israel is a long-standing commitment that spans multiple presidential administrations and generally enjoys bipartisan support. Despite the resurgence of the coronavirus in the United States, I continue to believe that this sizeable commitment is critical because of the country's unique status with the United States: it is a key ally in the Middle East and located in an unpredictable corner of the world where multiple state and non-state actors seek the demise of the country. Israel is also the only full-fledged democracy in the region. For these reasons, I continue to support funding to protect the people of Israel.

To advance Israeli security, I have also consistently advocated for a two-state solution, which has long had bipartisan support from the United States, as critical to Israel's security as a Jewish, democratic state—the best path to providing security and self-determination for both peoples—and the best hope for securing peace in the Middle East. I look forward to a future where Israelis can live peacefully without threat of violence, along with their Palestinian neighbors. With this in mind, I am deeply concerned with previous remarks by Prime Minister Netanyahu embracing unilateral annexation, which has generated many unanswered questions over Israel's security should the plan move forward. The plan would likely lead to an armed conflict, put innocent lives at risk and seriously compromise the decades of efforts invested by the United States to bring a peaceful solution that guarantees the security of Israel's residents and visitors.

Over 190 House Democrats have opposed unilateral annexation and have urged the Israeli government to reconsider its plans under a letter led by Representatives Jan Schakowsky, Ted Deutch, David Price, and Brad Schneider. In that letter, which I signed onto, we wrote: "our fear is that unilateral actions, taken by either side, will push the parties further from negotiations and the possibility of a final, negotiated agreement." In a separate letter led by Rep. Ocasio-Cortez, this position was taken further and suggested that, should a unilateral annexation occur, that funding could be conditioned to ensure that federal funds are not being used to advance unilateral annexation. The security assistance in the MOU is intended for self-defense and internal security and was crafted with the intent of preserving the two-state solution. While it may seem a difficult objective to achieve, the option for a two-state solution should remain on the table for future diplomatic negotiations.

I understand that the Ocasio-Cortez letter has generated concerns over my future support for Israel and its unique needs. My signature on this letter has not undermined my commitment to Israel or changed my voting record. I recently voted in favor of H.R. 7608, which fully funds the MOU. However, I worry that unilateral actions from any actor will negatively impact our collective security. It is important to continue preserving the two-state solution as a viable alternative to achieve peace.

I will carefully review future legislative action impacting Israel and will keep your suggestions in mind while navigating the legislative debate. Thank you for sharing your thoughts with me on this critical issue.

Sincerely,