

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 6, 2001

The President
The White House
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing you out of a deep sense of frustration, anger and concern over recent events in the Middle East. Less than eight months ago at Camp David, Israel offered a final status proposal to the Palestinians that was breathtaking in the scope of its concessions. The Palestinians rejected the Israeli offer, and a member of the Palestinian Authority said: "The issues of Jerusalem, the refugees and sovereignty will be decided on the ground and not in negotiations...the situation in the future will be more violent than the Intifada."

Over the past several months, the Palestinians have initiated on average of 30 "incidents" a day against Israeli soldiers and civilians. Initially, rocks and guns were used; increasingly, it is mortars and anti-tank missiles. Many of the attacks are well planned operations involving the highest levels of the Palestinian security forces, openly led by the PLO's own militia. PLO Chairman Yasser Arafat has released from detention since July over 130 members of the most radical anti-Israel groups directly involved in attacks against Israelis and has suspended all security cooperation with Israel. Since the start of the violence in September, he has never once stood up and addressed his people in Arabic unequivocally calling for an end to the violence, despite calls to do so by the United States.

Mr. President, the United States opened a dialogue with the PLO, allowed the PLO to maintain an office in Washington, allowed PLO officials to visit the United States and provided funding to the Palestinians under very specific conditions; that the Palestinian leadership remain committed to the negotiating process and that they renounce the use of violence. In fact, Section 1302 of the International Security and Development Act of 1985 specifically prohibits any employee of the U.S. government from negotiating with a PLO official unless the PLO "renounces the use of terrorism".

Given the drastic changes that have taken place in recent months in Palestinian behavior, we believe it is time for the United States to reassess our relations with the Palestinians. Such a reassessment should, in our view, examine whether those Palestinians involved in attacks against Israelis should be barred from coming to the United States, whether those Palestinian groups involved in violence should be designated as foreign terrorist organizations under 8 USC 1189, whether the PLO office in Washington should be allowed to remain open, and whether US aid to the Palestinians is in fact meeting its

goals and should continue. While this reassessment is taking place, we do not believe Chairman Arafat should be invited to meet with high-level officials in Washington. We also believe that you should reaffirm America's opposition to a unilaterally declared independent Palestinian state.

We raise these questions with tremendous sorrow about the turn of events in the region. The Palestinians had a unique opportunity to secure virtually everything they had been seeking from Israel at the negotiating table. For reasons that baffle us, they chose instead to use violence against Israel. That decision comes at a great cost to everyone involved and with no foreseeable benefit. From our perspective, it is time for the US to require that the leadership of the Palestinian Authority speak and act against the continuing violence and terrorism, or face a significant change in our relations with them.

It is also time for those of us in both parties who serve in Congress and your Administration to restate our commitment to Israel's security and the uniquely common values and interests which Americans and Israelis share.

Mr. President, we look forward to your thoughts on these issues and to working together on them.

Sincerely,

Cosponsors:

Sam Brownback (R-KS), Joe Biden (D-DE), Bill Frist (R-TN), Dianne Feinstein (D-CA), Don Nickles (R-OK), Joe Lieberman (D-CT), Daniel Akaka (D-HI), Wayne Allard (R-CO), George Allen (D-VA), Max Baucus (D-MT), Evan Bayh (D-IN), Robert Bennett (R-UT), Kit Bond (R-MO), Barbara Boxer (D-CA), John Breaux (D-LA), Jim Bunning (R-KY), Conrad Burns (R-MT), Ben Nighthorse Campbell (R-CO), Maria Cantwell (D-WA), Jean Carnahan (D-MO), Max Cleland (D-GA), Hillary Rodham Clinton (D-NY), Susan Collins (R-ME), Kent Conrad (D-ND), Jon Corzine (D-NJ), Larry Craig (R-ID), Mike Crapo (R-ID), Tom Daschle (D-SD), Mark Dayton (D-MN), Mike DeWine (R-OH), Chris Dodd (D-CT), Byron Dorgan (D-ND), Dick Durbin (D-IL), John Edwards (D-NC), John Ensign (R-NV), Mike Enzi (R-WY), Russell Feingold (D-WI), Peter Fitzgerald (R-IL), Bob Graham (D-FL), Phil Gramm (R-TX), Charles Grassley (R-IA), Tom Harkin (D-IA), Orrin Hatch (R-UT), Jesse Helms (R-NC), Ernest Hollings (D-SC), Tim Hutchinson (R-AR), Kay Bailey Hutchison (R-TX), Jim Inhofe (R-OK), Daniel Inouye (D-HI), Tim Johnson (D-SD), Edward Kennedy (D-MA), John Kerry (D-MA), Herb Kohl (D-WI), Jon Kyl (R-AZ), Mary Landrieu (D-LA), Carl Levin (D-MI), Blanche Lincoln (D-AR), Trent Lott (R-MS), John McCain (R-AZ), Mitch McConnell (R-KY), Zell Miller (D-GA), Barbara Mikulski (D-MD), Frank Murkowski (R-AK), Patty Murray (D-WA), Ben Nelson (D-NE), Bill Nelson (D-FL), Don Nickles (R-OK), Jack Reed (D-RI), Harry Reid (D-NV), John D. Rockefeller IV (D-WV), Rick Santorum (R-PA), Paul Sarbanes (D-MD), Chuck Schumer (D-NY), Jeff Sessions (R-AL), Richard Shelby (R-AL), Bob Smith (R-NH), Gordon Smith (R-OR), Olympia Snowe (R-ME), Arlen Specter (R-PA), Debbie Stabenow (D-MI), Ted Stevens (R-AK), Craig Thomas (R-WY), Fred Thompson (R-TN), Bob Torricelli (D-NJ), George Voinovich (R-OH), John Warner (R-VA), Ron Wyden (D-OR)