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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-2801

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Mr. Javier Solana
High Representative for the Common Foreign and Security Policy
Secretary-General of the Council of the European Union
Rue de la Loi, 175
Brussels, Belgium B-1048

Dear Mr. Solana,

I was deeply troubled and alarmed to read your recent comments urging the United Nations (UN) to set a "fixed deadline" to recognize a Palestinian state. I believe your suggestion is highly inadvisable, and hope you will retract or clarify your comments and recommit the European Union to finding a negotiated agreement, agreed to by both sides. It has been long-standing policy of the so-called Quartet of the EU, U.S., Russia and the UN to pursue a negotiated solution to the conflict, and it is essential that all four parties remain committed to that process rather than imposing a solution.

An imposed, non-negotiated solution would inevitably harm the interests of both sides in the conflict, since it is still unclear what the contours of that solution will be. Israelis and Palestinians have agreed on some points, but outstanding issues remain to be decided, including the status of refugees and of Jerusalem. Imposing an artificial solution would serve neither Israel nor the Palestinians.

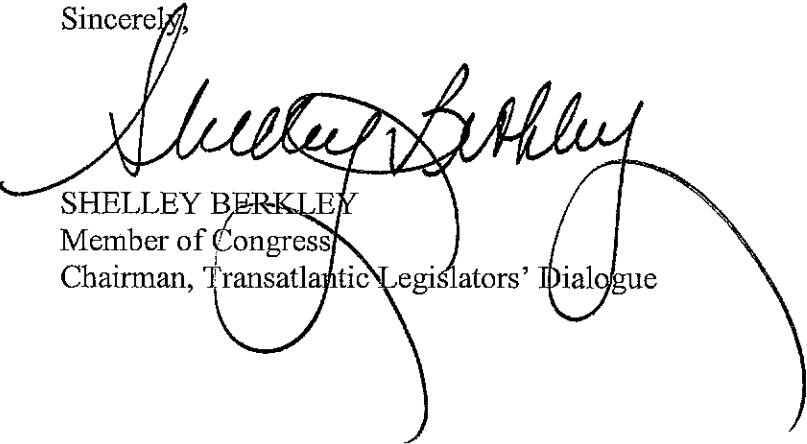
Furthermore, the Palestinians are currently completely unprepared for statehood. The Gaza Strip is controlled by a terrorist organization that upended Palestinian democracy and seized Gaza by force. Fatah, for its part, has shown itself to be weak, ineffective and corrupt. The two sides continue to fight each other and there is no reason to believe they will be able to form a unity government any time soon, particularly one that will accept the Quartet's requirements to accept Israel's right to exist, to abide by past agreements and to renounce terror. If the EU or the UN were to recognize a Palestinian state prematurely, it would only serve to strengthen Hamas, and lead to a fully-armed terrorist state on the border with Israel, Egypt and Jordan. This solution would only benefit the interests of Hamas, its sponsor Iran, and other extremists in the region.

I am also concerned that your comments would further entrench the Palestinian positions, rather than encourage them to return to the negotiating table. Fatah leaders have recently been unwilling to negotiate with Israel, and if they believe the UN will eventually impose a two-state solution, based on the pre-1967 borders, there would be no reason to resume

negotiations. They will wait, in expectation of a UN solution that may be more favorable to their interests.

It is unthinkable that any solution to this conflict could be imposed without a negotiated agreement to end the conflict, accepted by both sides. As members of the Quartet, we must focus our efforts on encouraging both sides to negotiate, make compromises, and prepare their populations for peace, by ending incitement and violence. I urge you to re-assert the EU's commitment to a negotiated settlement and withdraw any statements that might undermine those deliberations.

Sincerely,



SHELLEY BERKLEY
Member of Congress
Chairman, Transatlantic Legislators' Dialogue