

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 20, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW  
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Biden:

On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists committed heinous atrocities leading to the deadliest day in Israel's history, and more than 100 hostages remain in Gaza today. The ensuing war that Israel has waged in Gaza has resulted in devastation and tens of thousands of deaths. We call on you to continue to take bold diplomatic action during this time of crisis. It is our firm belief that only with two states for two peoples – an independent Israel alongside an independent Palestinian state – will we see enduring peace in the region and safety and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. To that end, in an effort to reignite U.S. leadership on a diplomatic solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we call on you to publicly outline a path for the United States to recognize a nonmilitarized Palestinian state.

For decades, the United States – under presidents of both political parties– has been a leader in facilitating diplomatic negotiations and in urging both sides to come to the table. For example, in March 1991, President George H.W. Bush announced to Congress that, “the time has come to put an end to the Arab-Israeli conflict,” and initiated eight months of diplomacy led by the U.S. Secretary of State James Baker that culminated in the Madrid Peace Conference in October 1991. For the first time, under American leadership, all of the parties to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict came together to hold direct negotiations. Additionally, in September 1993, President Bill Clinton brought together Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin and then-Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) negotiator Mahmoud Abbas at the White House in a symbol of unity to sign a peace agreement, commonly known as the Oslo Accords. This marked the first time Israeli and Palestinian leaders acknowledged and accepted each other's right to self-governance. And, subsequently, in June 2002, President George W. Bush cemented the two-state solution as official U.S. foreign policy when he shared his vision for “two states, living side by side in peace and security.”

Given the severity of the current crisis, this moment requires determined U.S. leadership that must move beyond facilitation. As such, we request the Biden Administration promptly establish a bold, public framework outlining the steps necessary for the U.S. to recognize a nonmilitarized Palestinian state, which includes the West Bank and Gaza, to be governed by a revitalized and reformed Palestinian Authority. We believe the framework's parameters should also include:

- A set of governmental and institutional reforms to the Palestinian Authority, among them reforms to democracy and governance, including:
  - Reforms to the education system;
  - Reforms to the judicial and security systems;

- Reforms to the prisoner payments program; and,
- Concerted efforts to combat corruption and incitement to violence.
- A requirement for the reformed Palestinian Authority, as the governing body of the West Bank and Gaza, to reaffirm its recognition of the State of Israel; and,
- A mandate within the reformed Palestinian Authority for government ministers and senior officials to commit to nonviolence, accept the principles of two states - an Israeli and a Palestinian state - and renounce Hamas and all terrorist activity.

Only with the success of the aforementioned initiatives and regional support for a two-state solution can the State of Israel exist with security and Israelis live without fear. We recognize that in order for this framework to be achieved, the Israeli government must take parallel steps, beginning with facilitating a major surge of humanitarian aid into Gaza and enabling the process of rebuilding Gaza. While we have been particularly disappointed by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's refusal to engage on a path to a Palestinian state, we believe that this provides even more reason for the Biden Administration to lead and push the Israeli government to take the following additional actions:

- Take effective action against settler violence in the West Bank;
- End home demolitions, including evictions of Palestinians from their property;
- Stop settlement planning and construction in the West Bank;
- Release customs revenues to the Palestinian Authority; and,
- Reactivate permits for Palestinian workers from the West Bank to enter Israel.

We recognize that none of this is possible until there is a ceasefire in Gaza, all hostages are released, and unfettered humanitarian aid is allowed into Gaza. We are grateful for the role that you and your Administration have played thus far in demonstrating your support for a diplomatic two-state solution and, throughout the war, demanding the protection of civilian life, access to necessary life-saving humanitarian aid for Palestinians in Gaza, and aiding the hostage negotiations that resulted in a week-long pause in fighting and the safe return of 105 hostages last year, including two Americans.

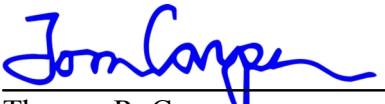
The diplomatic steps that you and your Administration have taken have been of utmost importance, and we urge you to do even more. We believe it is critical at this moment for the United States to signal our willingness to lead a regional peace initiative that would eventually result in U.S. recognition of a nonmilitarized Palestinian state, as well as Israel's full integration into the region. The road to enduring peace in the region depends entirely on the two-state solution—the establishment of a Palestinian state, existing in concert with a regionally-integrated Israel. Despite decades of U.S. support for this policy, there has been limited success in bringing it to fruition. In order to prevent future deaths and insecurity for both Palestinians and Israelis, the U.S. must continue to take decisive action to bring about a two-state solution once and for all.

This crisis has reached an inflection point. Your leadership is needed at this time now more than ever. As you said on October 25, 2023, "Israelis and Palestinians equally deserve to live side by side in safety, dignity, and peace. And there's no going back to the status quo as it stood on October the 6th." We agree. By providing a roadmap for U.S. recognition of a Palestinian state, the United States can set a path to finally realizing a two-state solution and reinvigorate

conversations towards a comprehensive regional peace plan. This would be in the interest of not only Palestinians but, crucially, also in the interest of our ally Israel. We strongly believe that the solution to this conflict will be found through diplomacy and that you are uniquely positioned to provide American leadership toward a two-state solution that will forge enduring peace in the region.

Mr. President, heed the call of history—seek peace and pursue it.

Sincerely,



Thomas R. Carper  
United States Senator



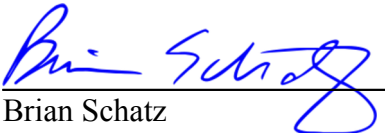
Tina Smith  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator



Brian Schatz  
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin  
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren  
United States Senator



Mazie K. Hirono  
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse  
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons  
United States Senator



Raphael Warnock  
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



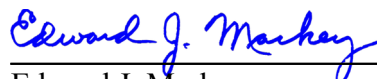
Sherrod Brown  
United States Senator



Peter Welch  
United States Senator



Christopher S. Murphy  
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey  
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich  
United States Senator

*Jeanne Shaheen*

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Jeanne Shaheen  
United States Senator