

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 3, 2014

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

Dear Secretary Kerry,

The recent conflict between Israel and Hamas has seen the latter's cynical and illegal use of human shields and the placement of its rocket launchers, weapons caches and other terrorist infrastructure within densely populated civilian areas. It is within this context that we are gravely concerned to learn of the repeated use of United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) facilities to maintain rocket stockpiles during the course of the conflict. We strongly condemn these actions.

According to news reports and press releases by the United Nations (UN), on July 16, July 22, and again on July 29, rockets were found during the course of inspections of UNRWA schools in Gaza. Of further concern, UN officials said the rockets found on July 16 were turned over to local authorities answerable to the Palestinian unity government, though it's unclear what formal powers this entity has in Gaza. With regard to the rockets found on July 16, the cache subsequently went missing, presumably returned to terrorist hands.

We appreciate UNRWA's important role in providing humanitarian, social services, education and other forms of assistance in the West Bank, Gaza, Lebanon, Jordan and Syria. Furthermore, we note Secretary General Ban Ki Moon's condemnation of the rocket incidents, UNRWA's ongoing investigation into their placement in these schools, and changes in protocol that have subsequently been adopted.

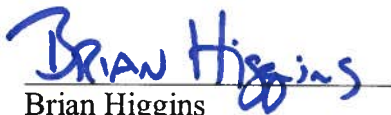
However, as the largest single-state contributor to UNRWA, providing \$294 million in Fiscal Year 2013, the United States has a responsibility to ensure that UNRWA facilities and personnel are not being used to perpetrate or facilitate acts of terrorism. We must ensure that United States taxpayer funds are not exploited for these nefarious purposes.


While we do not advocate a cutoff in funding at this time, these issues must be addressed. That is why we urge the State Department to conduct an independent investigation, while acknowledging the limitations imposed by the situation on the ground, to ascertain the extent to which UNRWA facilities are being misused in Gaza.

We also believe screening of staff for membership in Hamas and Hezbollah, both US designated foreign terrorist organizations, must be more effective going forward. Furthermore, site inspections by Operations Support Officers (OSO) should be increased in Gaza.

While we recognize UNRWA does not possess policing capabilities, or the ability to counter armed intruders, it must do more to prevent its facilities from being used to endanger the lives of civilians and commit acts of terrorism. Consequently, as the agency overseeing UNRWA contributions, the State Department is responsible for ensuring these funds are being used in a manner consistent with their humanitarian purpose. We therefore urge swift action to facilitate an independent investigation and ensure that UNRWA implements the necessary reforms to certify such incidents will not happen again.

Sincerely,


Brian Higgins
Member of Congress


Doug Collins
Member of Congress



Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress


Steve Chabot
Member of Congress


Nita M. Lowey
Member of Congress


Mark Meadows
Member of Congress


Theodore E. Deutch
Member of Congress


David P. Joyce
Member of Congress

Brad Sherman
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress

Gene Green
Member of Congress

Randy K. Weber, Sr.
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Doug Lamborn
Member of Congress

Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Trent Franks
Member of Congress

Patrick E. Murphy
Member of Congress

Scott Perry
Member of Congress

Steve Israel
Member of Congress

Leonard Lance
Member of Congress

Bill Pascrell, Jr.
Member of Congress

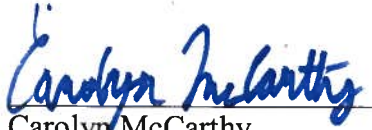
Bill Johnson
Member of Congress



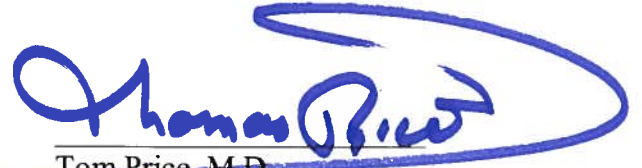
James R. Langevin
Member of Congress



Mike Kelly
Member of Congress



Carolyn McCarthy
Member of Congress



Tom Price, M.D.
Member of Congress



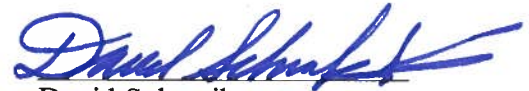
Abio Sires
Member of Congress



Steve Stivers
Member of Congress



Dina Titus
Member of Congress



David Schweikert
Member of Congress



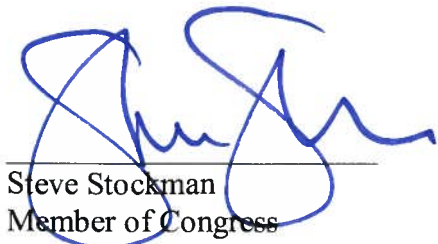
David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress



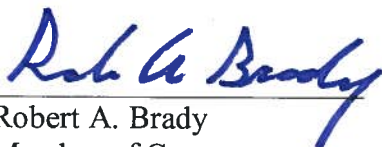
Chris Collins
Member of Congress



Brad Schneider
Member of Congress



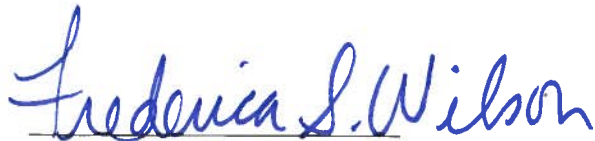
Steve Stockman
Member of Congress



Robert A. Brady
Member of Congress



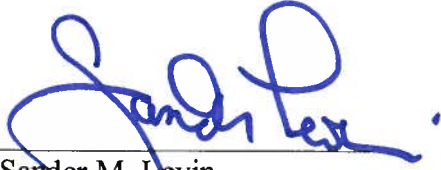
Curt Clawson
Member of Congress



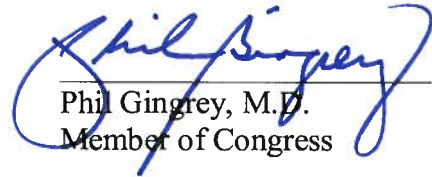
Frederica S. Wilson
Member of Congress



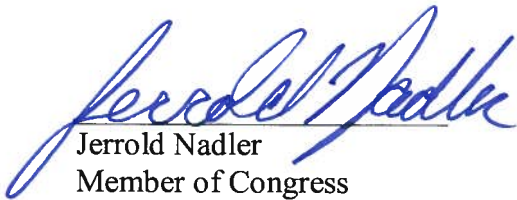
Steve Pearce
Member of Congress



Sander M. Levin
Member of Congress



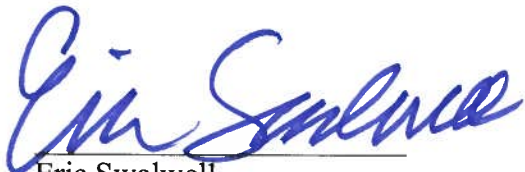
Phil Gingrey, M.D.
Member of Congress



Jerrold Nadler
Member of Congress



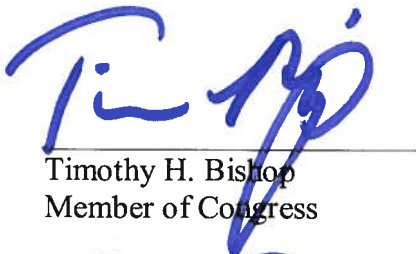
Gus M. Bilirakis
Member of Congress



Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress



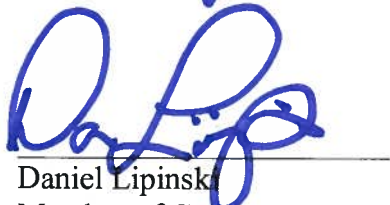
Paul C. Brown, M.D.
Member of Congress



Timothy H. Bishop
Member of Congress



Bill Posey
Member of Congress



Daniel Lipinski
Member of Congress



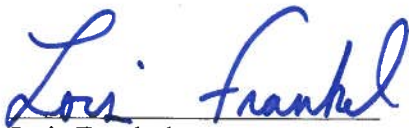
Lou Barletta
Member of Congress



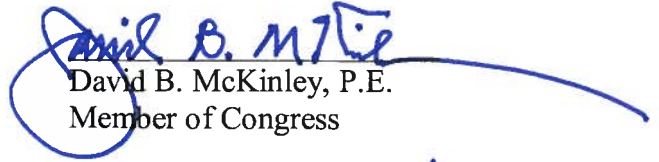
Marc A. Veasey
Member of Congress



Tim Murphy
Member of Congress



Lois Frankel
Member of Congress



David B. McKinley, P.E.
Member of Congress



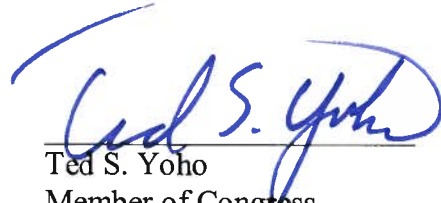
Rush Holt
Member of Congress



Joseph R. Pitts
Member of Congress



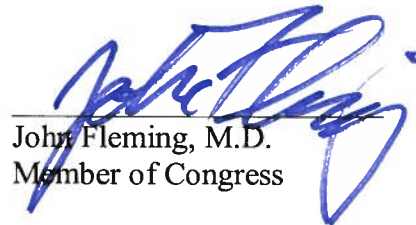
Henry A. Waxman
Member of Congress



Ted S. Yoho
Member of Congress



Adam B. Schiff
Member of Congress



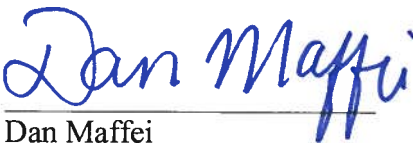
John Fleming, M.D.
Member of Congress



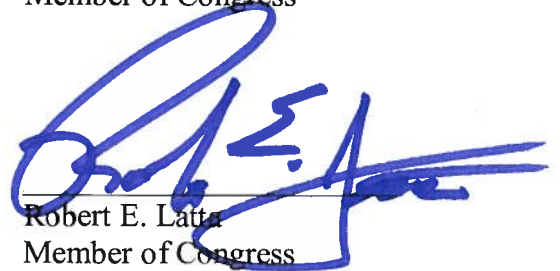
Bill Owens
Member of Congress



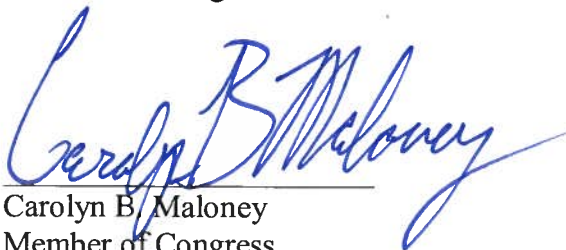
Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Dan Maffei
Member of Congress



Robert E. Latta
Member of Congress



Carolyn B. Maloney
Member of Congress



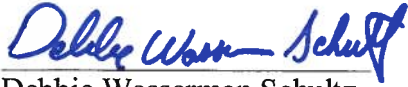
Michele Bachmann
Member of Congress



Mark Takano
Member of Congress



Michael G. Grimm
Member of Congress



Debbie Wasserman Schultz
Member of Congress