

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 29, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton:

We write to urge you to do everything possible to ensure that the recent tensions between the U.S. and Israeli administrations over the untimely announcement of future housing construction in East Jerusalem do not derail Israeli-Palestinian peace negotiations or harm U.S.-Israel relations. In fact, we strongly believe that it is more important than ever for Israel and the Palestinians to enter into direct, face-to-face negotiations without preconditions on either side.

Despite your best efforts, Israeli-Palestinian negotiations have been frozen for over a year. Indeed, in a reversal of 16 years of policy, Palestinian leaders are refusing to enter into direct negotiations with Israel. Instead, they have put forward a growing list of unprecedented preconditions. By contrast, Israel's prime minister has stated categorically that he is eager to begin unconditional peace negotiations with the Palestinians. Direct negotiations are in the interest of all parties involved – including the United States.

We also urge you to reaffirm the unbreakable bonds that tie the United States and Israel together and to diligently work to defuse current tensions. The Israeli and U.S. governments will undoubtedly, at times, disagree over policy decisions. But disagreements should not adversely affect our mutual interests – including restarting the peace process between Israel and her neighbors and preventing Iran from acquiring nuclear weapons.

From the moment of Israel's creation, successive U.S. administrations have appreciated the special relationship between our two nations. Israel continues to be the one true democracy in the Middle East that brings stability to a region where it is in short supply. Whether fighting Soviet expansionism or the current threats from regional aggression and terrorism, Israel has been a consistent, reliable ally and friend and has helped to advance American interests. Similarly, by helping keep Israel strong, the United States has helped to reduce threats to Israel's security and advance the peace which successive Israeli governments have so avidly sought.

It is the very strength of our relationship that has made Arab-Israeli peace agreements possible, both because it convinced those who desired Israel's destruction to abandon any such hope and because it gave successive Israeli governments the confidence to take calculated risks for peace. As the Vice President said during his recent visit to Israel: "Progress occurs in the Middle East when everyone knows there is simply no space between the U.S. and Israel." Steadfast American backing has helped lead to peace treaties with Egypt and Jordan.

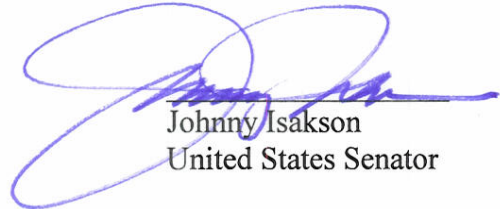
We recognize that our government and the Government of Israel will not always agree on particular issues in the peace process. But such differences are best resolved amicably and in a manner that befits longstanding strategic allies. We must never forget the depth and breadth of our alliance and always do our utmost to reinforce a relationship that has benefited both nations for more than six decades.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Barbara Boxer
United States Senator



Johnny Isakson
United States Senator