

**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**  
**Washington, DC 20515-1004**

May 20, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.  
President of the United States  
The White House  
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, N.W.  
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We write to express our grave concern about the ongoing military conflict taking place in Israel and Palestine and call for an immediate ceasefire. We condemn the unacceptable, indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian militant groups that have killed 10 Israeli civilians, yet we are also deeply concerned about the disproportionate force employed by the government of Israel -- with weapons provided by the U.S.- that has led to over 200 Palestinians, including 61 children,<sup>1</sup> as well as the destruction of offices of media outlets and health care facilities -- actions that may constitute war crimes.<sup>2</sup> We have a special obligation to scrutinize the actions of our close ally Israel, given our provision of weaponry and other military and diplomatic support to the Israeli government. This military and diplomatic support for Israel leads many worldwide to hold the United States responsible for Israel's actions, undermining the U.S. international leadership that you are working so hard to restore.

While we condemn the indiscriminate rocket attacks from Hamas, we recognize that the current conflict began prior to the launch of the first rocket. The Israeli campaign to carry out demolition and forcibly evict Palestinians from their homes in East Jerusalem, coupled with last week's attack on the Al Asqa mosque during Ramadan, has contributed to the violence today. We are grateful that you reportedly expressed your desire to see a ceasefire in your recent calls with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu. Subsequent reports, however, indicated that you did not specifically press Netanyahu for a ceasefire. We are also troubled that the United States blocked three attempts by the 14 members of the UN Security Council to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire. We implore you to immediately instruct UN Ambassador Linda Thomas-Greenfield to support the ceasefire resolution and that you urgently convey to Prime Minister Netanyahu in no uncertain terms that Israel must urgently prioritize a ceasefire.

Further, we are concerned by the recent revelations that your administration approved a \$735 million new weapons sale to Israel. This seems antithetical to any efforts to try and deescalate violence. We ask that you place an indefinite hold on the sale until a ceasefire has been achieved. We also urge you to review whether the sale is consistent with US law under the Arms Export Control Act, which prohibits weapons sales that are used against civilians or in civilian areas.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/interactive/2021/05/17/world/middleeast/israel-palestine-gaza-conflict-death-toll.html>

<sup>2</sup> [https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/shocking-and-horrifying-israel-destroys-ap-office-in-gaza/2021/05/15/9c5da734-b5c3-11eb-bc96-fdf55de43bef\\_story.html](https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/shocking-and-horrifying-israel-destroys-ap-office-in-gaza/2021/05/15/9c5da734-b5c3-11eb-bc96-fdf55de43bef_story.html)  
<https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/what-we-do/news-stories/news/israeli-airstrikes-kill-civilians-and-damage-msf-clinic-gaza>; <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/israelopt-pattern-of-israeli-attacks-on-residential-homes-in-gaza-must-be-investigated-as-war-crimes/>

After the previous U.S. administration greatly damaged our nation's credibility on the global stage, we cannot afford to apply human rights standards in an inconsistent way that gives the appearance of bias due to our claimed geopolitical interests. For that reason, we implore you to call for an immediate ceasefire and allow a thorough review of any further arms sales to Israel. We are hopeful that, under your leadership, our nation can chart a new course that applies these standards in an even-handed way, with special attention to those situations where the U.S. plays a role through the provision of military equipment or other forms of support.

Sincerely,



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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



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Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

/s/

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André Carson  
Member of Congress



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Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



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Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress