March 8, 2023

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

Dear Mr. President:

We write as supporters of a strong U.S.-Israel relationship who seek to protect the viability of a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. We wish to commend your administration’s efforts to deescalate heightened tensions in Israel and the West Bank, as well as share our deep concern regarding the planned changes to the structure of the Israeli judiciary, the fragile security situation in the West Bank, and the threat of partial or full annexation of areas that would most certainly be part of a future Palestinian state. We urge you to use all diplomatic tools available to prevent Israel’s current government from further damaging the nation’s democratic institutions and undermining the potential for two states for two peoples.

The proposals to grant members of the Knesset control over judicial appointments, eliminate judicial review of legislation, and permit the legislature to overturn Supreme Court decisions would jeopardize Israeli democracy, which in turn would undermine the very foundation of the U.S.-Israel relationship. Stripping the judiciary of its check on the governing coalition would empower far-right lawmakers seeking to entrench settlement of the West Bank and advance a pro-annexation agenda, undermining the prospects for a two-state solution and threatening Israel’s existence as a Jewish and democratic state. As Israel has seen massive and sustained protests against the plans, it is crucial that the Israeli government live up to the democratic ideals on which it was founded and avoid a constitutional crisis. As you have stated, “the genius of American democracy and Israeli democracy is that they are both built on strong institutions, on checks and balances, on an independent judiciary.” We could not agree more.

We are also deeply alarmed by the rapidly deteriorating security situation in the West Bank and the potential for sustained violence, and we applaud your administration’s recent attempts to stabilize the West Bank. The Palestinian Authority, teetering on financial collapse, has lost much of its popular legitimacy and effective control of many northern Palestinian cities, such as Jenin and Nablus, to extremist groups. In response to increased and credible terrorist threats in the West Bank, the Israeli Defense Forces have executed raids in Palestinian cities targeting members of armed militia groups, oftentimes leading to civilians being caught in the crossfire. Inclusive of settler attacks, more than 60 Palestinians have been killed in the West Bank so far this year, a pace that is on track to surpass last year’s record-breaking casualties.

Palestinian violence against Israelis also has increased recently with a number of horrifying attacks, including the killing of Jewish worshipers and children in East Jerusalem. We condemn these killings and have repeatedly criticized actions by Palestinian leaders and organizations, including incitement, acts of terror, and payments to the families of terrorists, that harm Israelis, exacerbate the conflict, and put a negotiated resolution to the conflict further out of reach. We are profoundly concerned that the recent violence and increased tensions could spiral into a major conflict, despite the recent steps taken. U.S. Central Intelligence Agency Director
William J. Burns recently warned that Israel appears to be on the brink of confronting a third intifada. The political and security vacuum in the West Bank is a serious threat to Israeli and Palestinian civilians alike.

In this fragile and combustible moment, consistent and sustained U.S. diplomatic leadership is critical to preempt counterproductive unilateral actions and prevent violent escalations. As committed supporters of the U.S.-Israel relationship, we commend your administration's firm opposition to actions that imperil the future of a two-state solution. The recent joint statement with our NATO allies and the signing of a United Nations Security Council Presidential Statement are important demonstrations of the U.S.’ commitment to opposing settlement expansion, such as the new plans to build thousands of settlement units and retroactively legalize more than a dozen illegal outposts. With the Knesset on the cusp of stripping the judiciary’s check over the current government, we urge you to make clear that the U.S. will firmly oppose any moves toward annexation that the Israeli government may pursue as a result. We thank you for your work and again urge you to use all diplomatic tools at your disposal to address this grave situation. We look forward to supporting you in this effort.

Sincerely,

Rosa L. DeLauro
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Mark Takano
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress
Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Al Green  
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress

Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress

Teresa Leger Fernandez  
Member of Congress

Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress
John B. Larson  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar  
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal  
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress

Paul D. Tonko  
Member of Congress

Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress
Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette  
Member of Congress

Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress

Becca Balint  
Member of Congress

Jill Tokuda  
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis  
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress
Andy Kim
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Jesus G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Madeleine Dean
Member of Congress

Colin Z. Allred
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

Melanie Stansbury
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman
Member of Congress
Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

Nikki Budzinski

Julia Brownley
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

Andrea Salinas
Member of Congress

James A. Himes
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress
Eric Swalwell
Member of Congress

Mikie Sherrill
Member of Congress

Emilia Strong Sykes
Member of Congress

Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline
Member of Congress

John P. Sarbanes
Member of Congress

Eric Sorensen
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress