January 11, 2024

The Honorable Antony Blinken
United States Secretary of State
The State Department
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Secretary Blinken:

As the war in Gaza continues, we join our Israeli and Palestinian friends and family in mourning the tragic toll on civilian populations on both sides. We write to you today to call on Hamas to immediately release all the hostages held in Gaza, cease all rocket fire on Israel, lay down its arms, and surrender control of Gaza to a legitimate representative of the Palestinian people. There should be no mistaking that Hamas has within its control the ability to stop this conflict and bring relief to the Palestinians they were elected to govern.

Throughout more than sixteen years of ruling the Gaza Strip, Hamas has diverted untold billions in international aid it has received for building homes, hospitals, schools, and mosques to instead building a massive terrorist tunnel network, weapons factories, and war infrastructure, and has hidden its operations within those very places that are used by civilians in their everyday lives. Hamas has turned all of Gaza and the people it was supposed to be governing into shields to protect its nefarious operations in violation of international law. Every few years, Hamas has attacked Israeli civilians indiscriminately, also in flagrant violation of international law. This year, as peace between Israel and her Arab neighbors came ever closer thanks to the Abraham Accords, Hamas launched an unprecedented attack on October 7, murdering more than 1,200, taking over 240 hostages, as well as torturing, sexually abusing, and raping its victims.

We applaud your stand against calls for a one-sided ceasefire. Americans do not want an ephemeral ceasefire that will merely return the region to the status quo, with Hamas empowered to regroup and fulfill its promise to repeat the attacks of October 7. Palestinians in the Gaza Strip understand the humanitarian disaster wrought by this Iranian proxy, along with Palestinian Islamic Jihad and other terrorist groups that dominate life in Gaza. Ceasefires with an unrepentant Hamas have been tried time and again, and every time have led to stronger attacks by Hamas, culminating in the present tragedy. Another Hamas ceasefire will only lead to more death and destruction for everyone.

The people of Gaza need real, sustainable relief from the fighting. This can be immediately accomplished if those responsible for starting this war — Yahya Sinwar, Mohhamed Deif, and their acolytes – forswear their nihilistic, genocidal aspirations to destroy Israel, release the hostages and surrender. Then reconstruction of Gaza can begin in earnest, followed by a true process of renewal, supported by the United States and our allies in the region and the broader international community. We join you in urging countries across the world to call on Hamas to
release the hostages and surrender immediately, so that lives can be saved, and a two-state solution can once again be on the horizon. Hamas will lose this war that they started on October 7, but they can, if they decide, make the decent choice to immediately bring this war to an end, to lay down their arms and save the lives of the Palestinians they’ve oppressed and used as human shields for so many years.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

Kathy Manning
Member of Congress

Grace Meng
Member of Congress

Haley M. Stevens
Member of Congress

Wiley Nickel
Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Darren Soto
Member of Congress

Dina Titus
Member of Congress
Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress

Jared Moskowitz  
Member of Congress

Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress

Scott H. Peters  
Member of Congress

Jimmy Panetta  
Member of Congress

Jake Auchincloss  
Member of Congress

Steny H. Hoyer  
Member of Congress

Mike Gallagher  
Member of Congress

Shri Thanedar  
Member of Congress

Donald G. Davis  
Member of Congress