

Key Members of Congress Sign Rothman/Austria Anti-Incitement Letter

"Incitement, especially by official [Palestinian] institutions, damages the prospects of reaching a peace agreement between the Palestinians and ... Israel, and only encourages terrorism."

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

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CONTACT:

Aaron Keyak

office: (202) 225-5061

cell: (202) 905-6361

email: aaron.keyak@mail.house.gov

Washington, DC -

Today, Congressman Steve Rothman (D-NJ) and Congressman Steve Austria (R-OH), both members of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations, sent the following letter to President Barack Obama. It requests that his administration do all in its power to insist that President of the Palestinian Authority, Mahmoud Abbas, reenter peace talks, without preconditions, and demands that President Abbas eliminate all incitement against Israel and the Jewish people coming from his government, Palestinian entities, or officials.

A majority of the House Appropriations Subcommittee on State and Foreign Operations and the House Foreign Affairs Committee, 39 members, signed the Rothman/Austria letter. In addition, 7 Members of Congress signed onto their letter who did not sit on either of those committees, bringing the total number of signers to 46.

The full text:

March 31, 2011

President Barack Obama

The White House

<http://rothman.house.gov>

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1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President,

We live in an increasingly complex world. Recently, we have been bombarded by news and images from around the globe about the popular uprisings in Egypt, Libya, Bahrain, and throughout the Middle East. We have seen the effects of yet another devastating earthquake, which struck Japan just weeks ago, leaving hundreds of thousands of people without homes and countless others dead. And we continue to live with the constant threat posed by North Korea's and Iran's pursuit of nuclear weapons as well as the danger of nuclear proliferation at the hands of terrorists. We write to request that, while all of these events are consuming the daily news coverage, we not take our eye off of working toward a goal that is close to all of our hearts: a peaceful and secure Jewish State of Israel.

We are sure that you share our disappointment in President Mahmoud Abbas's decision to withdraw from peace talks in October of last year and his stubborn refusal to reengage as a willing partner for peace with Israel. The continued intransigence of the Palestinian leadership is both hurtful to the prospect for a two-state solution and to a final resolution of the conflict that still plagues the Israeli and Palestinian people. Unfortunately, we live in a time when the Al Aqsa Martyrs Brigades will rush to take credit for the horrific, inhuman, and brutal attack in Itamar against the Fogel family, including three of their children, an 11-year-old, 4-year-old, and 3-month-old. This must serve as a wakeup call that the current state of affairs is dangerous and unacceptable. In that regard, we respectfully request that you do everything possible to urge President Abbas to root out terrorism, return to negotiations without preconditions, earnestly work toward peace with Israel, and slam the door on any effort to deal with final status issues at the United Nations.

As part of that, President Abbas must fully renounce any and all Palestinian incitement against Israel and the Jewish people. On March 8, 2009, a number of us sent President Abbas a letter calling on him "to truly end anti-Israel and anti-Jewish incitement," but clearly there needs to be further pressure. Palestinian incitement continues and there is almost no effort by them to promote coexistence and peace. We would like to bring to your attention a report recently released by Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's office entitled "Culture of Peace and Incitement Index," that unfortunately shows that Palestinian incitement continues. Television programs run by the Palestinian Authority and textbooks in government schools continue to praise martyrdom and terrorists and call for an armed struggle against the Israelis. Incitement, especially by official institutions, damages the prospects of reaching a peace agreement between the Palestinians and America's strategic partner and indispensable ally, the Jewish State of Israel, and only encourages terrorism.

It is our hope that an independent Palestinian state can be realized, living in peace alongside the Jewish State of Israel. While the United States must not and cannot impose a solution, our country has an important role to play in encouraging the two parties to restart direct negotiations. We respectfully request that you and your administration do all in your power to insist that President Abbas reenters

peace talks, without preconditions, and demand that President Abbas eliminate all vestiges of incitement coming from his government, Palestinian entities, or officials.

Sincerely,

STEVEN R. ROTHMAN

Member of Congress

STEVE AUSTRIA

Member
of Congress

List of signers:

House Appropriations Subcommittee on State of Foreign
Operations

Frank Wolf, Virginia

Tom Cole, Oklahoma

Mario Diaz-Balart, Florida

Charles Dent, Pennsylvania

Steve Austria, Ohio

Nita Lowey, New York

Jesse L. Jackson, Jr.,
Illinois

Adam Schiff, California

Steve R. Rothman, New
Jersey

House Foreign Affairs Committee

Chris Smith, New Jersey

Dan Burton, Indiana

Dana Rohrabacher, California

Donald Manzullo, Illinois

Ed Royce, California

Steve Chabot, Ohio

Mike Pence, Indiana

Joe Wilson, South Carolina

Connie Mack, Florida

Michael McCaul, Texas

Ted Poe, Texas

Gus Bilirakis, Florida

Jean Schmidt, Ohio

Bill Johnson, Ohio

David Rivera, Florida

Tom Marino, Pennsylvania

Jeff Duncan, South Carolina

Renee Ellmers, North Carolina

Gary Ackerman, New York

Brad Sherman, California

Eliot Engel, New York

Russ Carnahan, Missouri

Albio Sires, New Jersey

Ted Deutch, Florida

Dennis Cardoza, California

Ben Chandler, Kentucky

Brian Higgins, New York

Chris Murphy, Connecticut

Frederica Wilson, Florida

William R. Keating, Massachusetts

Members on neither committee

Shelley Berkley, Nevada

Robert Dold, Illinois

Gary Peters, Michigan

Cathy McMorris Rodgers,
Washington

Jan Schakowsky, Illinois

Patrick Tiberi, Ohio

Henry Waxman, California

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