

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, DC 20520

John Bolton
Assistant to the President for National Security Affairs
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave, NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

July X, 2018

Dear Secretary Pompeo and Mr. Bolton:

We write to request the administration immediately take action to alleviate the growing humanitarian crisis in the Gaza strip. The lack of adequate medical care, clean water, reliable electricity, and other necessities has created a complex humanitarian and security crisis.

In Gaza, more than 50 percent of the children live beneath the poverty level, living on \$1.74 US dollars per day. A report from the UN noted that 95 percent of tap water is not safe to drink, and last year warned that the Gaza Strip could become “unlivable” well before 2020.

The cut to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees (UNRWA) will unnecessarily exacerbate the humanitarian and security issues in this region. As strong supporters of the United States’ commitment to the safety and dignity of Palestinians and Israelis, we urge you to restore the vital contributions the U.S. makes to UNRWA and release appropriated USAID funding for humanitarian programs.

We have heard from U.S. government-funded nonprofits, who are providing critical medical treatment to thousands in Gaza, that the funding uncertainty caused by the Administration’s policy review, has forced them to lay-off staff and cut back life-saving services. Due to the thousands of people who sustained injuries during recent protests, it is even more urgent that the U.S. continue funding humanitarian aid.

This crisis has created serious security concerns for our ally Israel, in fact, Israeli Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot has noted that if the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is not alleviated, spiraling economic and social conditions in Gaza could threaten Israel’s security.¹ We urge you to immediately restore funding for humanitarian aid in Gaza because it plays a critical role in the larger U.S. strategy to secure peace and stability in the region.

We agree with our Senate Colleagues, who wrote to you in a letter led by Senator Sanders on May 11, 2018, that “There is much blame to go around for the horrific conditions in Gaza. Hamas – due to its ongoing repression, corruption and insistence on pursuing a violent struggle

¹ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-chief-said-to-warn-gaza-war-likely-if-humanitarian-crisis-persists/>

against Israel – bears significant responsibility for the deteriorating situation. While Israel withdrew its forces from within Gaza in 2005, its continuing control of Gaza’s air, sea, and northern, southern, and eastern borders, and its restrictions on the freedom of movement of people, legitimate goods and equipment in and out of Gaza, have made the humanitarian situation worse. Egypt and the Palestinian Authority must also play a more constructive role.”

We believe the U.S. should encourage all parties to increase access to electricity flow into Gaza to meet the critical need for reliable energy. We should also push our partners to ease the blockade on the movement of goods, equipment and people in and out of the territory, especially for materials and supplies related to critical projects like medicine, hospital supplies and water treatment. Alleviating the poverty, unemployment, food insecurity, and lack of access to adequate, health, clean water, and electricity in Gaza is a critical first step to improving the security and safety of both Palestinians and Israelis.

We all recognize the serious security and political challenges in Gaza. However, U.S. support for the basic human rights of Palestinians living in Gaza must not be conditioned on progress on those fronts. For this reason, we strongly urge you to immediately restore all U.S. funding for humanitarian aid in Gaza, including all USAID funding under policy review by the State Department.

Sincerely,