

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu:

As strong supporters of the US-Israel special relationship and a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we write to urge your government not to demolish the Palestinian village of Susya and other similarly situated Palestinian communities in the West Bank. The destruction and displacement of such communities would run counter to shared US and Israeli values, while further undermining long-term Israeli security, Palestinian dignity, and the prospects for peacefully achieving two states for two peoples.

Susya sits on private Palestinian land in “Area C” of the West Bank and has existed in the South Hebron Hills since at least the 1830s. More than 40 farming and shepherding families—including more than 80 children—live in Susya. The village, like many other Palestinian communities throughout Area C, has repeatedly sought building permits to lawfully construct homes and other structures on their land and have been consistently denied.

Representatives of your government have publicly announced their intention to destroy and remove approximately 40 percent of the structures in Susya, including homes, their children’s school, and the solar panels that are the village’s sole source of electricity. Moreover, Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman threatened last year that “work was being done” to evacuate the entire village, as well as the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar near Ma’aleh Adumim, “within a few months.”

While Palestinian villages remain under demolition order, the Israeli Civil Administration has dramatically expanded settlements throughout the West Bank. According to the Israeli non-government organization Peace Now, Israel advanced 88 plans in 2017 that include 6,742 housing units in 59 separate settlements. This is a 258 percent increase in the number of housing units proposed in 2016. In addition to this expansion, your government has officially approved the construction of new settlements (including the new settlement of Amihai) and retroactively legalized 19 settler outposts since 2011.

The forcible eviction of Palestinian communities and the expansion of settlements in areas of the West Bank, which would become part of a future Palestinian state, abandon our two countries’ shared values of justice and respect for human rights. These actions unilaterally change facts on the ground and jeopardize the prospects of a two-state solution. This endangers Israel’s future as a Jewish democracy and prohibitively impacts Palestinian’s national aspirations. [More than 300 rabbis](#) from across the United States wrote to you earlier this year stating, “Denying Palestinians shelter, electricity and schools and derailing the eventual creation of a Palestinian state will do nothing to achieve the safe, peaceful and prosperous future for Israel that we all yearn for. On the contrary, without a two-state solution, we fear that Israel cannot in the long term remain the secure, democratic homeland for the Jewish people.”

Instead of forcibly evicting Palestinian communities, we encourage your government to fairly re-evaluate their requests for building rights. We look forward to continuing to work with the Israeli government, the people of Israel, and all interested parties to support Israeli security and move toward achieving two states for two peoples.

Sincerely,

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

John A. Yarmuth
Member of Congress