Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

November 21, 2019

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C., 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary:

We write to express our strong disagreement with the State Department's decision to reverse decades of bipartisan U.S. policy on Israeli settlements in the occupied West Bank by repudiating the 1978 State Department legal opinion that civilian settlements in the occupied territories are "inconsistent with international law." This announcement, following the administration's decision to move the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem outside of a negotiated agreement; its closure of the Palestinian mission in Washington, D.C. and U.S. Consulate in Jerusalem; and its halting of aid Congress appropriated to the West Bank and Gaza, has discredited the United States as an honest broker between Israel and the Palestinian Authority, severely damaged prospects for peace, and endangered the security of America, Israel, and the Palestinian people.

U.S. administrations from both parties have followed the 1978 guidance because settlement expansion into the occupied West Bank makes a contiguous Palestinian state inviable, jeopardizing Israel's future as a secure, democratic homeland for the Jewish people. The State Department's unilateral reversal on the status of settlements, without any clear legal justification, therefore has offered a tacit endorsement of settlements, their expansion, and associated demolitions of Palestinian homes. In addition, one day after the Department's decision, Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu moved to advance a bill to annex the Jordan Valley. As annexation and the United States' approval thereof would destroy prospects for a two-state solution and lead to a more entrenched and possibly deadlier conflict, this decision erodes the security of both Israel and the United States.

This State Department decision blatantly disregards Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which affirms that any occupying power shall not "deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies." In ignoring international law, this administration has undermined America's moral standing and sent a dangerous message to those who do not share our values: human rights and international law, which have governed the international order and protected U.S. troops and civilians since 1949, no longer apply. If the U.S. unilaterally abandons international and human rights law, we can only expect a more chaotic and brutal twenty-first century for Americans and our allies, including the Israeli people.

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Given these serious implications, we strongly urge you to reverse this policy decision immediately.

Sincerely,

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Earl Blumenauer
Member of Congress

David Price
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Ro Khanna
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier
Member of Congress

Deb Haaland
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

David Cicilline
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress

Katie Porter
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley
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Mark Takano
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Jared Huffman
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Mike Doyle
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Raúl M. Grijalva
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Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress

Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
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Pramila Jayapal
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Rosa DeLauro
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TJ Cox
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Gerald. E. Connolly
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Seth Moulton
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Nydia M. Velázquez
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Pete Aguilar
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José E. Serrano
Member of Congress

Joe Courtney
Member of Congress

Ed Perlmutter
Member of Congress

Jason Crow
Member of Congress

Judy Chu
Member of Congress

Robert C. "Bobby" Scott
Member of Congress

Katherine M. Clark
Member of Congress

Scott Peters
Member of Congress

Robin L. Kelly
Member of Congress

Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.
Member of Congress

Brenda L. Lawrence
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack
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Member of Congress

Paul Tonko
Member of Congress

Dwight Evans
Member of Congress

Karen Bass
Member of Congress

Jennifer Wexton
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Alma Adams
Member of Congress

Lucille Roybal-Allard
Member of Congress

Adam Smith
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
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Joseph D. Morelle
Member of Congress

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André Carson
Member of Congress

Anthony Brown
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Maxine Waters
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress

Suzan DelBene
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Jim Himes
Member of Congress