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.
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

John Sarakowsky
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

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress

Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress

Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

Chellie Pingree  
Member of Congress

Mike Doyle  
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro  
Member of Congress

Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress

David Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Katie Porter  
Member of Congress

Mark Takano  
Member of Congress

Jared Huffman  
Member of Congress

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress

Ann McLane Kuster  
Member of Congress

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress
Eddie Bernice Johnson
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.
Member of Congress

James P. McGovern
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Denny Heck
Member of Congress

Bill Foster
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Danny K. Davis
Member of Congress

Jesus G. "Chuy" Garcia
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
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 Lawrence  
Member of Congress

J. G. Butterfield  
Member of Congress

Dave Loebsack  
Member of Congress

Salud Carbajal  
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