

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 27, 2017

The Honorable António Guterres
Secretary-General of the United Nations
United Nations Headquarters
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary-General:

The United States co-founded the United Nations with the intention of saving future generations from war and reaffirming fundamental human rights. While much good is being done and has been done by the body, many of its member states and agencies are using the U.N.'s privileged platform to advance an anti-Israel agenda. Too often, the U.N. is exploited as a vehicle for targeting Israel rather than as a forum committed to advancing the lofty goals of its founders. These actions have at times reinforced the broader scourge of anti-Semitism, and distracted certain U.N. entities from their original missions.

Although, as Republicans and Democrats, we disagree on many issues, we are united in our desire to see the United Nations improve its treatment of Israel and to eliminate anti-Semitism in all its forms. Through words and actions, we urge you to ensure that Israel is treated neither better nor worse than any other U.N. member in good standing. To that end, we commend the words of our nation's Ambassador to the U.N., Nikki Haley, who recently stated, "It is the U.N.'s anti-Israel bias that is long overdue for change."

We praise you for disavowing the recent anti-Israel report by the United Nations Economic and Social Commission for Western Asia (ESCWA) and demanding that it be withdrawn. Going forward, we urge you to pursue a comprehensive effort to improve the U.N.'s treatment of Israel along the following lines:

- The U.N. funds and maintains a number of standing committees, which far too often serve no purpose other than to attack Israel and inspire the anti-Israel boycott, sanctions, and divestment (BDS) movement. These committees must be eliminated or reformed.
- While the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) does some important work on Holocaust education, its member states continue to advance measures that target Israel and deny the Jewish and Christian connections to Jerusalem. UNESCO member states must be made to realize that these actions only undermine the credibility of the organization.

- The United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA) downplays its role in perpetuating troubling anti-Israel bias and activities. UNRWA must pursue reforms or risk significant consequences.
- Most troubling is the United Nations Human Rights Council (UNHRC). Charged with shining a light on gross human rights violations, the UNHRC—whose membership currently includes some of the world’s worst human rights violators—instead devotes time to unwarranted attacks against Israel. The UNHRC even maintains a permanent item on its agenda—“Agenda Item VII”—to assess Israel even as numerous other countries, including some represented on the Council, commit egregious human rights abuses against their citizens on a daily basis. Speaking recently at the UNHRC in Geneva, U.S. Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for International Organization Affairs Erin Barclay criticized the UNHRC’s anti-Israel focus as “unfair and unbalanced,” noting that the body’s “obsession with Israel...is the largest threat to the Council’s credibility” and “limits the good we can accomplish by making a mockery of this Council.”

The UNHRC should be the premier international body addressing the many pressing human rights challenges of our time in countries such as Russia, China, North Korea, Syria, Cuba, Venezuela, and South Sudan. It is currently not living up to this mission. We urge you to seek specific reforms to end the Council’s imbalanced focus on Israel, including through removal of Agenda Item VII and requiring competition among states seeking membership on the Council.

As both the U.N.’s principal founding member and its largest contributor, the United States should insist on reform. As duly elected representatives of the American people, we take seriously our responsibility to conduct rigorous oversight of U.S. engagement at the United Nations. We are deeply committed to international leadership and to advancing respect for human rights. But continued targeting of Israel by the U.N. Human Rights Council and other U.N. entities is unacceptable. This situation must change. We urge you to engage member states in a comprehensive effort to directly confront and root out this bias.

If you continue to build on your recent action, we stand ready to work with you to eliminate the organization’s anti-Israel bias, and to fight anti-Semitism in all its forms.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Christopher A. Coons
U.S. Senator



Mitch McConnell
U.S. Senator



Charles E. Schumer
U.S. Senator



Todd Young
U.S. Senator



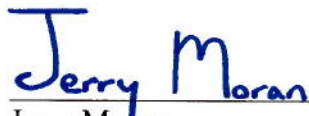
Gary Peters
U.S. Senator



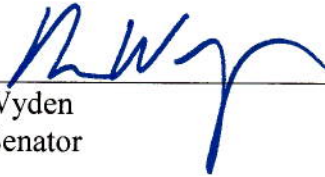
Thom Tillis
U.S. Senator



Bill Nelson
U.S. Senator



Jerry Moran
U.S. Senator



Ron Wyden
U.S. Senator



Cory Gardner
U.S. Senator



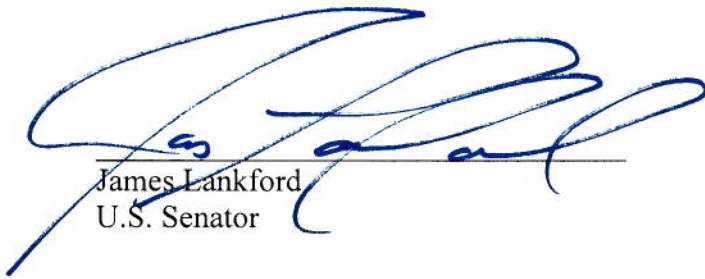
Richard Blumenthal
U.S. Senator



Mike Crapo
U.S. Senator



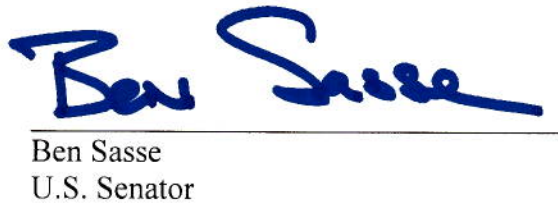
Kirsten Gillibrand
U.S. Senator



James Lankford
U.S. Senator



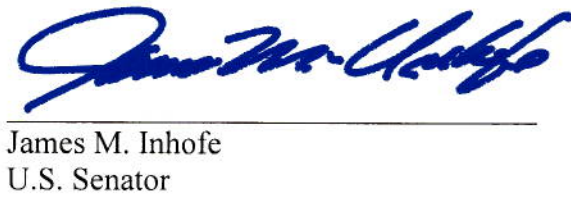
Tammy Baldwin
U.S. Senator



Ben Sasse
U.S. Senator



Debbie Stabenow
U.S. Senator



James M. Inhofe
U.S. Senator



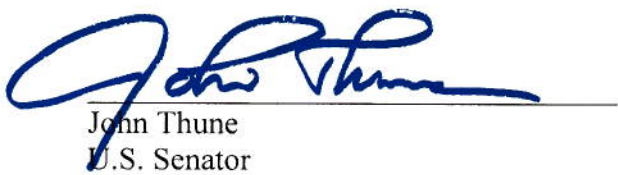
Tim Kaine
U.S. Senator



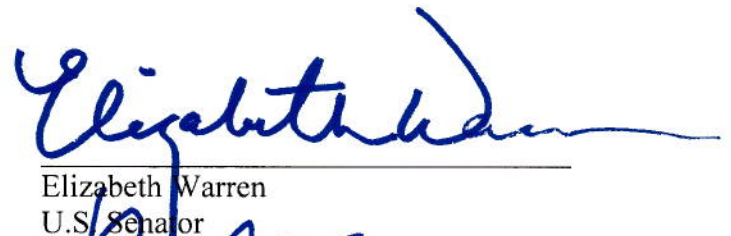
Orrin G. Hatch
U.S. Senator



Maria Cantwell
U.S. Senator



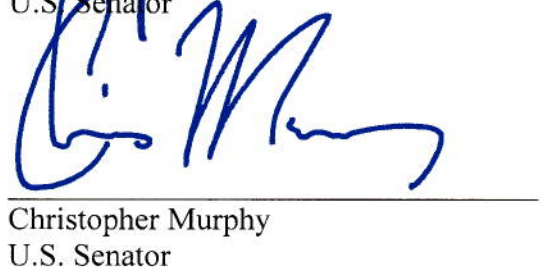
John Thune
U.S. Senator



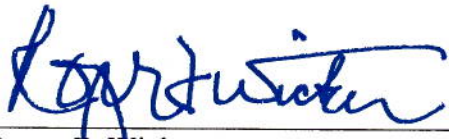
Elizabeth Warren
U.S. Senator



Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator



Christopher Murphy
U.S. Senator



Roger W. Wicker
U.S. Senator



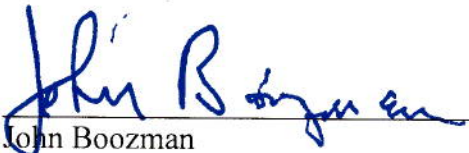
Edward J. Markey
U.S. Senator



Susan M. Collins
U.S. Senator



Chris Van Hollen
U.S. Senator



John Boozman
U.S. Senator



Richard J. Durbin
U.S. Senator



Dean Heller
U.S. Senator



Robert Menendez
U.S. Senator




Jeff Flake
U.S. Senator



Tammy Duckworth
U.S. Senator



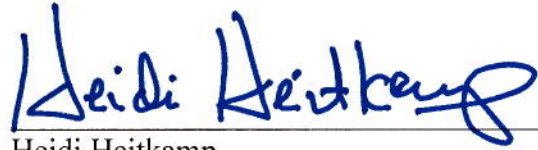
Rob Portman
U.S. Senator



Robert P. Casey, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Patrick Toomey
U.S. Senator



Heidi Heitkamp
U.S. Senator



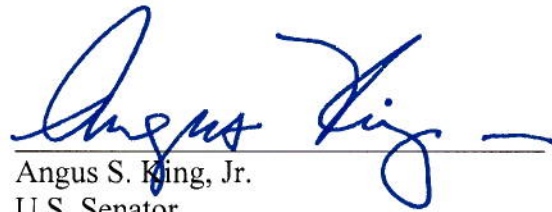
Deb Fischer
U.S. Senator



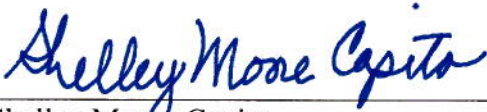
Sheldon Whitehouse
U.S. Senator



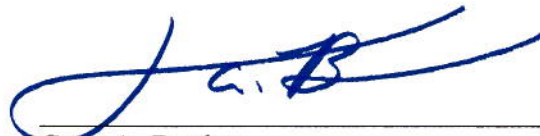
Roy Blunt
U.S. Senator



Angus S. King, Jr.
U.S. Senator



Shelley Moore Capito
U.S. Senator



Cory A. Booker
U.S. Senator



John McCain
U.S. Senator



Claire McCaskill
U.S. Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
U.S. Senator



Patty Murray
U.S. Senator



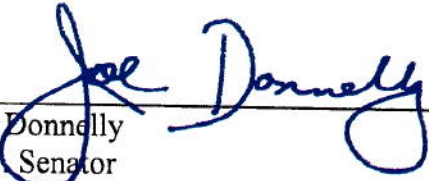
Tim Scott
U.S. Senator



Amy Klobuchar
U.S. Senator



John Kennedy
U.S. Senator



Joe Donnelly
U.S. Senator



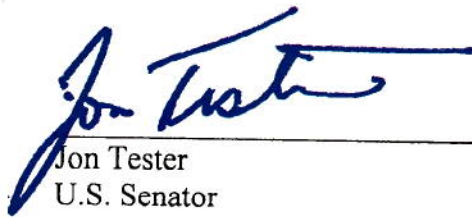
Daniel Sullivan
U.S. Senator



Mazie Hirono
U.S. Senator



Ron Johnson
U.S. Senator



Jon Tester
U.S. Senator



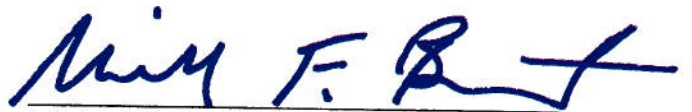
Thad Cochran
U.S. Senator



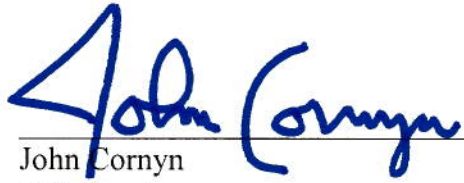
Benjamin L. Cardin
U.S. Senator



David A. Perdue
U.S. Senator



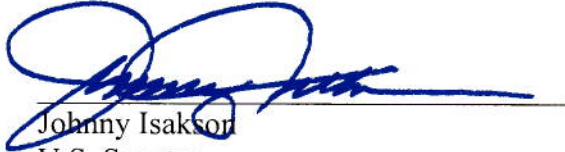
Michael F. Bennet
U.S. Senator



John Cornyn
U.S. Senator



Joe Manchin, III
U.S. Senator



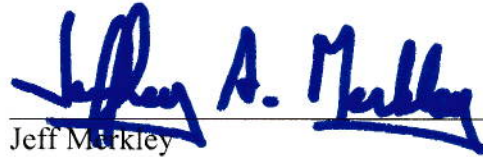
Johnny Isakson
U.S. Senator



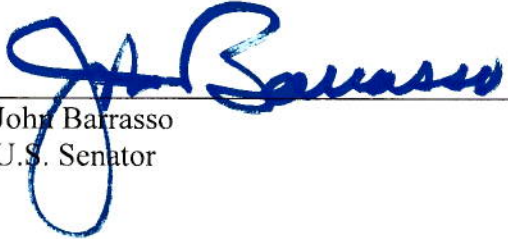
Thomas R. Carper
U.S. Senator



Chuck Grassley
U.S. Senator



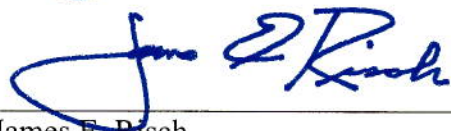
Jeff Merkley
U.S. Senator



John Barrasso
U.S. Senator



Mark R. Warner
U.S. Senator



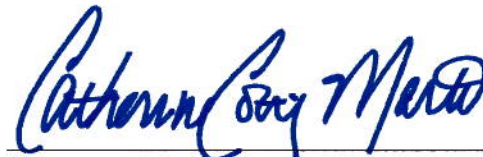
James E. Risch
U.S. Senator



Kamala Harris
U.S. Senator



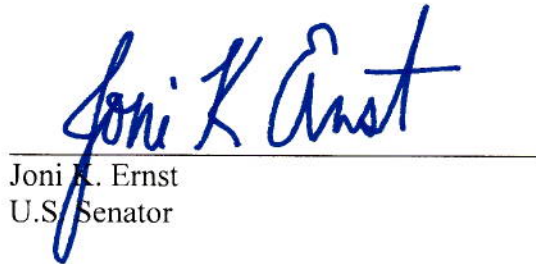
Lindsey Graham
U.S. Senator



Catherine Cortez Masto
U.S. Senator



Lamar Alexander
U.S. Senator



Maggie Hassan
U.S. Senator


Joni K. Ernst
U.S. Senator



Al Franken
U.S. Senator



John Hoeven
U.S. Senator


Tom Udall
U.S. Senator


Richard Burr
U.S. Senator


Jack Reed
U.S. Senator


Mike Lee
U.S. Senator


Sherrod Brown
U.S. Senator


Steve Daines
U.S. Senator


Martin Heinrich
U.S. Senator



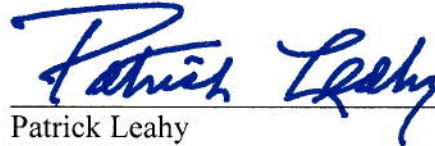
Pat Roberts
U.S. Senator



Brian Schatz
U.S. Senator



Luther Strange
U.S. Senator



Patrick Leahy
U.S. Senator



Ted Cruz
U.S. Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
U.S. Senator



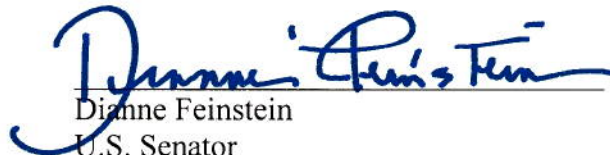
Bob Corker
U.S. Senator



Bernard Sanders
U.S. Senator




M. Michael Rounds
U.S. Senator




Dianne Feinstein
U.S. Senator



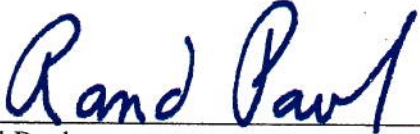
Lisa Murkowski
U.S. Senator



Michael B. Enzi
U.S. Senator



Richard C. Shelby
U.S. Senator



Rand Paul
U.S. Senator