

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

June 11, 2008

President George W. Bush
The White House
Washington, DC

Dear Mr. President:

The State of Israel has much to celebrate—and be proud of—in the sixty years since it was established. Yet, in those six decades, Israel has failed to enjoy one day of real peace. We commend you for your continued leadership in promoting peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians and genuinely hope they will lead to positive results.

We are, however, deeply concerned about recent negative developments in the area. The first is the situation in Gaza. As you know, Israelis living along the border with Gaza have been inundated with unprovoked rocket fire almost daily since Israel withdrew from Gaza in August 2005. Palestinian terrorists have fired over 4,000 rockets and mortars from Gaza into southern Israel during that period, terrorizing the population of Sderot and other border towns. Over a dozen innocent Israelis have been killed, and thousands more have been injured or traumatized. Living a normal life in these towns has become nearly impossible.

Compounding this problem, Hamas, which took over Gaza in an illegal coup last year and remains committed to Israel's destruction, has been rapidly improving the training and equipping of its forces. Aided by Iranian funding and support, Hamas has been smuggling long-range rockets, anti-tank missiles, anti-aircraft missiles and other sophisticated weapons into Gaza, while Hamas personnel have been actively training in Iranian camps. Such a rapid military buildup is becoming a growing military threat to Israel and increasingly threatens Israeli civilians.

With Hamas expanding its inventory of long range Katyusha rockets, they are able to reach larger cities like Ashkelon, which has a population of a quarter of a million. While you were in Israel celebrating its 60th anniversary, a Katyusha rocket from Gaza struck a mall in Ashkelon, wounding 90 civilians, including several children. At the same time, Hamas has acted against the interests of Gaza's population by attacking the civilian infrastructure used to provide humanitarian assistance such as food and fuel, and by carrying out their rocket and other attacks from Palestinian civilian population centers.

Israel has demonstrated a great amount of restraint in the face of this constant provocation. Few countries would have tolerated such risks to their populations. Nevertheless, Israel, like any other nation, has the right – and the obligation – to defend her citizens from external threats. As Israel struggles to deal with the growing challenges from Gaza, it becomes all the more important for us to continue to support Israel's right

to self defense. We particularly urge you to stand by Israel at the United Nations - where too many countries refuse to acknowledge Israel's right to act in her own defense - and veto any one-sided U.N. resolution.

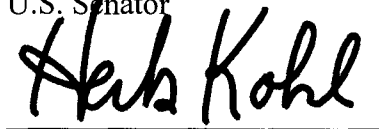
Finally, we must express our concern with the inadequate response of some of the Arab world to the efforts of Israel and the Palestinians to reach a negotiated agreement. We anticipated more from nations that have claimed reaching such an agreement is one of their top priorities. We struggle to understand why those Arab states, that are flush with oil revenues, cannot provide meaningful financial assistance to the Palestinian Authority. At last year's donors' conference many pledges were made, most of which have yet to be fulfilled. Saudi Arabia, which as a result of oil revenues had a budget surplus in 2007 of \$47.6 billion, has provided a paltry \$61.6 million to the Palestinian Authority. That is not a serious commitment to this process. Furthermore, most Arab states have done little to advance a policy of recognition of Israel or reconciliation with Israel. They have not provided the type of public political support Palestinian leaders will need in order to make the necessary compromises for peace. We must make it clear to our Arab friends that this process cannot succeed without their active financial, moral and political support, and that they bear a large responsibility for its success - or failure.

Mr. President, we know you face many challenges in the Middle East and elsewhere over the next few months. We urge you to continue your efforts to advance the Israel/Palestinian negotiations, to support Israel's right to self defense against the growing threats from Gaza, and to demand that the Arab states do more to support those negotiations. We look forward to working with you to advance these critical objectives.

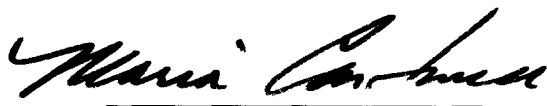
Sincerely,

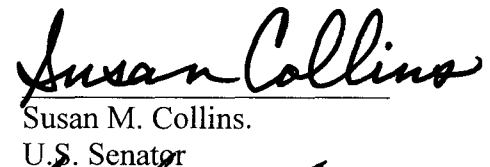


Mary Landrieu
U.S. Senator

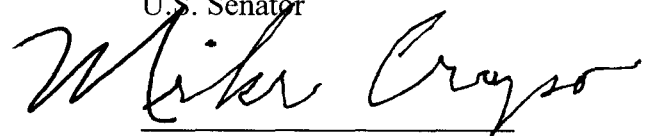


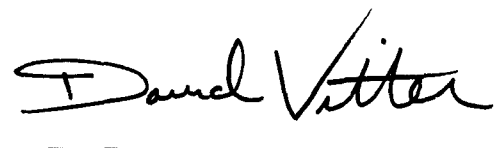


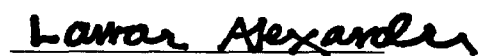




Susan M. Collins.
U.S. Senator







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