February 6, 2020

The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We write to express our strong disapproval of your administration’s proposal, the purported aim of which is to advance peace between Israelis and Palestinians. Our concern is both with the substance of your plan, which will exacerbate and entrench conflict rather than resolve it, and with the timing of its release.

In December, the U.S. House of Representatives passed H.Res.326 with bipartisan support. That resolution indicated Congressional opposition to unilateral annexation of the West Bank, asserted longstanding U.S. opposition to settlement expansion, and reaffirmed that any viable U.S.-proposed peace plan must include support for a two-state solution. A real two-state solution is the only conflict-ending means of securing both national self-determination for Palestinians and an Israel that is secure, democratic, and a homeland for the Jewish people.

However, the “ultimate deal” that your team has incubated for the past three years is not a serious or good faith attempt to bring such a durable peace between the parties to this conflict. Of utmost concern, your proposal effectively paves the way for permanent occupation of the West Bank. It endorses unilateral annexation of Israeli settlements, as well as the Jordan Valley. While your proposal uses the language of statehood for Palestinians, it provides for far less than an actual, viable state. A collection of disconnected Palestinian enclaves — surrounded by settlements and settlement infrastructure annexed by Israel, and still under Israeli control — does not constitute statehood. Crafted by a team that has long indicated its animosity to actual Palestinian statehood, your proposal attempts to make a genuine two-state solution impossible.

We are deeply concerned that your administration developed a proposal without consulting Palestinians and that no Palestinian leadership could plausibly accept. It could result in renewed violence in Israel and across the occupied territories. It may destabilize Jordan, a vital U.S. ally, and endanger Israel's peace treaties with Jordan and Egypt. It will also likely deepen animosity toward the United States throughout the broader Middle East.

In addition to the highly problematic nature of your proposal, the timing of its release suggests motives unrelated to helping solve the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Coming just over a month before Israel’s third election in a year — against the backdrop of Prime Minister Benjamin...
Netanyahu’s indictments – releasing the plan now appears to be an inappropriate intervention in a foreign election.

A U.S. proposal that promotes unilateral annexation and jettisons a real two-state solution is bad for Israel, for the shared values that have historically undergirded the U.S.-Israel relationship, and for the bipartisan consensus in the U.S. on the importance of that relationship, which Israel has long understood to be a crucial strategic asset.

Your plan will hurt Israelis and Palestinians alike, pushing them toward further conflict. It does not have our support, and the Israeli government must not take it as license to violate international law by annexing all or portions of the West Bank.

Sincerely,

Andy Levin
Member of Congress

Alan Lowenthal
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

James McGovern
Member of Congress

Barbara Lee
Member of Congress

Steve Cohen
Member of Congress

Bobby L. Rush
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Cedric L. Richmond
Member of Congress

Sean Casten
Member of Congress
Jahana Hayes
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Kim Schrier, M.D.
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

John Lewis
Member of Congress

Lisa Blunt Rochester
Member of Congress

Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

Diana DeGette
Member of Congress

G. K. Butterfield
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan
Member of Congress

Marcy Kaptur
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress

Peter J. Visclosky
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress