

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

September 21, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Thank you for the continued U.S. support for humanitarian demining efforts around the world, which play a critical role bolstering civilian safety and security. We are deeply concerned about the imminent closure of humanitarian demining efforts in the West Bank, especially given how close this project is to completion, and request that the Administration coordinate with the international community and private sector donors to secure an additional \$1 million to prevent the program's closure. These humanitarian demining efforts are coordinated with and receive support from both Palestinian and Israeli authorities and have long represented an area of cooperation between the parties.

There are three minefields in the Jordan Valley, contaminated with tens of thousands of landmines, that continue to pose an ongoing threat for roughly 53,000 civilians. These densely laid minefields cut across prime agricultural land, keeping countless acres of land out of use while fields neighboring the minefields teem with a variety of crops. These are the last minefields in populated areas, dating to the Six Day War, that require humanitarian demining in the territory, and once cleared, humanitarian demining efforts will be complete.

Demining operations require a minimum of \$2 million per year, enabling completion of the three minefields in approximately eight years. The U.S. Government has and continues to support the project with \$1 million per year. However, competing demands from Ukraine have caused funding from the European Union and other donors to be reprogrammed leaving a \$1 million annual funding gap.

Without an additional \$1 million, this life-saving program will shut down entirely by January 2024. The program, which represents the only humanitarian demining initiative in the West Bank, is currently drawing up demobilization plans. Once closed, it will not be financially viable to restart this program and civilians living nearby will live under the threat of mines indefinitely.

It is because of this threat that we request that the Administration coordinate with the international community and private sector donors to secure an additional \$1 million to prevent the closure of the humanitarian demining program in the West Bank. We further encourage the Administration seek a funding solution that would sustain the program at no less than \$2 million per year for the next eight years to ensure the complete removal of all lethal explosive threats from the remaining three minefields.

The closure of the humanitarian demining program in the West Bank would leave tens of thousands of Palestinians to live under constant threat of unexploded ordnance, while the allocation of just \$1 million in additional resources can, in just a few short years, result in an unquestionable humanitarian achievement, enabling Palestinian families to farm their land for the first time in over 50 years. In the Fiscal Year 2024 State, Foreign Operations, and Related Programs Appropriations Committee Report, the House of Representatives signaled bipartisan support for this program by including the West Bank in areas listed by the House Appropriations Committee to receive “continued support” through the Conventional Weapons Destruction account. The U.S. has an opportunity to build upon its many years of support for this program to lead the successful completion of this project.

We steadfastly support the Administration’s continued obligation of funds for humanitarian demining efforts in the West Bank and appreciate your consideration of this important request.

Sincerely,



---

Dean Phillips  
Ranking Member  
Subcommittee on the Middle  
East, North Africa, and  
Central Asia



---

Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



---

Chrissy Houlahan  
Member of Congress



---

Aumua Amata Coleman  
Radewagen  
Member of Congress



---

Bradley Scott Schneider  
Member of Congress



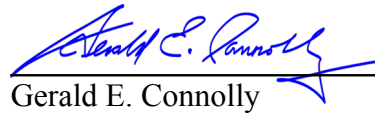
---

Michael R. Turner  
Member of Congress



---

Sydney Kamlager-Dove  
Member of Congress



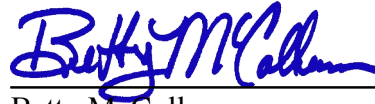
---

Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



---

Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



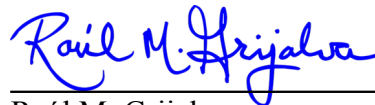
---

Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress



---

Donald Norcross  
Member of Congress



---

Raúl M. Grijalva  
Member of Congress



---

Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



---

Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



---

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



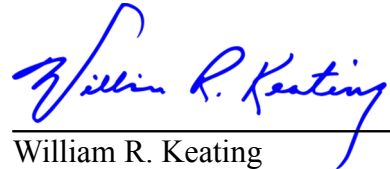
---

Pramila Jayapal  
Member of Congress



---

Kevin Mullin  
Member of Congress



---

William R. Keating  
Member of Congress



---

Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress



---

James P. McGovern  
Member of Congress



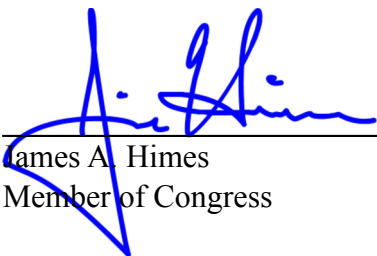
---

Nikema Williams  
Member of Congress



---

Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



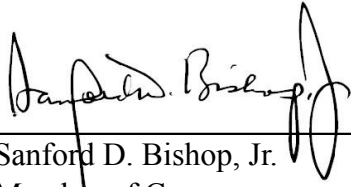
---

James A. Himes  
Member of Congress



---

Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



---

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress



---

André Carson  
Member of Congress



---

Stephen F. Lynch  
Member of Congress



---

Ami Bera, M.D.  
Member of Congress



---

Daniel T. Kildee  
Member of Congress



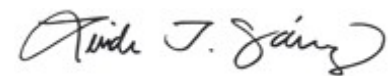
---

Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



---

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress



---

Linda T. Sánchez  
Member of Congress



---

Judy Chu  
Member of Congress



---

Lisa Blunt Rochester  
Member of Congress



---

Colin Z. Allred  
Member of Congress



---

Susie Lee  
Member of Congress



---

Raja Krishnamoorthi  
Member of Congress



---

Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



---

David J. Trone  
Member of Congress



---

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress



---

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



---

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress



---

Barbara Lee  
Member of Congress



---

Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



---

Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



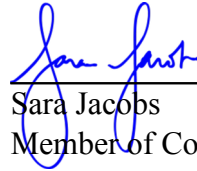
---

Al Green  
Member of Congress



---

Greg Stanton  
Member of Congress



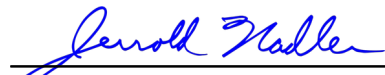
---

Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



---

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



---

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress



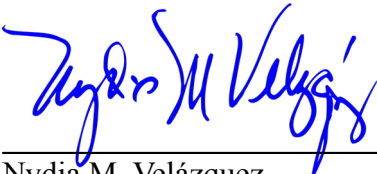
---

Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



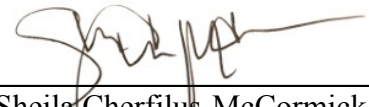
---

Adam Smith  
Member of Congress



---

Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



---

Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress



---

Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



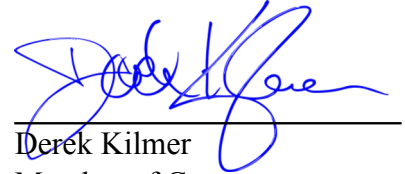
---

Madeleine Dean  
Member of Congress



---

Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



---

Derek Kilmer  
Member of Congress



---

John Garamendi  
Member of Congress



---

Jim Tokuda  
Member of Congress

CC: Richard Verma, Deputy Secretary of State for Management and Resources, Department of State  
Barbara Leaf, Assistant Secretary of State for Near Eastern Affairs, Department of State  
Jessica Lewis, Assistant Secretary of State for the Political-Military Affairs Bureau, Department of State