

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 2, 2017

President Donald Trump
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Trump:

As you welcome Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to Washington, we welcome your attention to the important cause of peace between Israel and the Palestinians. And we trust that your involvement will be marked by a spirit of fairness and respect that unfortunately was often absent in the previous administration's approach.

One of the most troubling aspects of the Obama administration's handling of this issue was the double standard applied to the two parties. This double standard saw Israel criticized and condemned regularly, while the Palestinian Authority (PA) and its leadership were rarely, if ever, held accountable. This unwillingness to speak out when the PA rewarded and glorified terrorism left many with the mistaken impression that the PA was earnestly seeking peace—and that Israel was the impediment.

This impression, however, could not be further from the truth.

The Palestinian Authority spends around \$300 million a year—about eight percent of its budget—paying salaries and benefits to convicted terrorists and their families, including to those who have killed Americans, such as U.S. Army veteran Taylor Force. Far from being an informal practice, these payments are codified in Palestinian Authority law. The more deadly the attack, the larger the payments. Alongside lavish financial benefits, PA law establishes assistance programs to promote the careers of those who served time in jail for attacks—in essence, an affirmative action program for terrorists, funded by U.S. aid.

If these facts seem hard to believe, it is because for many years they were obscured by an administration that found them inconvenient to the narrative it sought to promote.

We urge you to raise this matter with President Abbas during his visit, and to make clear to him that the PA's practice of diverting aid money to terrorists and their families must end. Morally it must end because the United States cannot be complicit in incentivizing terror. And strategically it must end because the PA will never convince Americans, the Congress, or Israel that it is serious about peace while it is still funding terror. We agree with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, who said recently that ending PA funding for terror is "a test for peace."

Mr. President, we urge you to call on President Abbas not just to stop this practice, but also to repeal the PA's laws that reward terror—and to shut down the bureaucracy the PA has

built to administer the program. The United States cannot treat the Palestinian Authority as a partner for peace, or take seriously President Abbas's claimed desire for peace, so long as the PA is spending hundreds of millions of dollars a year funding and incentivizing terror.

Sincerely,



Marco Rubio
U.S. Senator



Tom Cotton
U.S. Senator



Lindsey Graham
U.S. Senator