

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

December 12, 2023

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.

The White House

1600 Pennsylvania Avenue

Washington, DC 20500

The Honorable Antony Blinken

Department of State

2201 C St. NW

Washington, DC 20520

Dear President Biden and Secretary Blinken:

We write to express our deep concern about the alarming escalation of settler violence<sup>1</sup> in the West Bank, particularly in light of the most recent data from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA)<sup>2</sup> as of November 28, 2023.

According to the latest OCHA updates:

1. Since October 7, at least 143 Palestinian households comprising 1,014 people, including 388 children, have been displaced amid settler violence and access restrictions. The displaced households are from 15 herding/Bedouin communities.<sup>3</sup>
2. Between October 7 and November 28, 232 Palestinians, including 61 children, were killed in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. Of those killed, 225 were killed by Israeli forces, eight by Israeli settlers, and one either by troops or settlers. The seven-week toll represents more than half of all Palestinians killed in the West Bank this year. So far, 2023 has been the deadliest year for Palestinians in the West Bank since OCHA began recording casualties in 2005.<sup>4</sup>
3. Since October 7, Israeli forces have injured 3,101 Palestinians, including at least 500 children, over half of them in the context of demonstrations. An additional 73 Palestinians have been wounded by settlers,

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<sup>1</sup> Vox, "Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in the West Bank, briefly explained," December 2, 2023, <https://www.vox.com/politics/2023/12/2/23984104/west-bank-israel-palestine-settler-violence>

<sup>2</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #60," December 5, 2023, <https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-60>

<sup>3</sup> United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "The other mass displacement: while eyes are on Gaza, settlers advance on West Bank herders [EN/HE]" November 1, 2023, <https://www.unocha.org/publications/report/occupied-palestinian-territory/other-mass-displacement-while-eyes-are-gaza-settlers-advance-west-bank-herders-enhe>

<sup>4</sup> OCHA United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, "Hostilities in the Gaza Strip and Israel | Flash Update #53," November 28, 2023, [https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-53?\\_gl=1\\*uh3ifc\\*\\_ga\\*MTk2NjUwMTkxMy4xNzAxODk3OTM5\\*\\_ga\\_E60ZNX2F68\\*MTcwMTg5NzkzOS4xLjE](https://www.ochaopt.org/content/hostilities-gaza-strip-and-israel-flash-update-53?_gl=1*uh3ifc*_ga*MTk2NjUwMTkxMy4xNzAxODk3OTM5*_ga_E60ZNX2F68*MTcwMTg5NzkzOS4xLjE)

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and 18 others either by forces or settlers. Some 33 percent of those injuries have been caused by live ammunition, compared with nine percent in the first nine months of 2023.

4. Since October 7, OCHA has recorded 287 settler attacks against Palestinians, resulting in Palestinian casualties (33 incidents), damage to Palestinian-owned property (215 incidents), or both casualties and property damage (39 incidents). This reflects a daily average of over five incidents, compared with three since the beginning of the year. One-third of these incidents included threats with firearms, including shootings. In nearly half of all incidents, Israeli forces were either accompanying or actively supporting the attackers.<sup>5</sup>

The severity of these incidents underscores the urgent need for immediate action<sup>6</sup> to address settler violence and protect the lives and well-being of Palestinians in the West Bank. The majority of these incidents of settler violence<sup>7</sup> are happening in the Israeli Government-controlled Area C, where 700,000 Israeli settlers<sup>8</sup> reside in approximately 230 settlements and where approximately 300,000 Palestinians live in 532 residential areas that are regularly<sup>9</sup> subjected to land confiscations by settlers<sup>10</sup>.

In light of this, we respectfully urge your administration to take the following steps:

1. Continue to urge the Israeli Government not to distribute weapons to settlers in the West Bank.
2. Take every necessary measure to protect at least 60,000 Palestinian Americans in the occupied West Bank.
3. Declassify and publish all United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority reports on settler violence.
4. Provide a detailed report to Congress on what the Biden Administration is doing to ensure the Israeli Government adequately addresses violations identified in United States Security Coordinator for Israel and the Palestinian Authority reports and holds perpetrators accountable.”
5. Prevent U.S. funding from being used to expand settlements and outposts.
6. Determine if any of the 60,000 Americans in Israeli settlements and outposts are responsible for crimes committed against Palestinians and refer all U.S. citizens involved to the Department of Justice for prosecution.

We appreciate your attention to this matter and your administration's expressed concern about the escalating situation in the West Bank. We are encouraged by the Department's [announcement](#) of a new visa restriction

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<sup>5</sup> Yesh-Din, “Settler Violence Incidents in the West Bank - October 7th until November 20th, 2023,” November 28, 2023, <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/israeli-settler-violence-against-palestinians-in-the-west-bank-under-the-guise-of-war/>

<sup>6</sup> B'Tselem, “Emergency call to the international community - stop the forcible transfer in the West Bank,” October 29, 2023, [https://www.btselem.org/press\\_releases/20231029\\_joint\\_emergency\\_call\\_to\\_the\\_international\\_community\\_stop\\_the\\_forcible\\_transfer\\_in\\_the\\_west\\_bank](https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20231029_joint_emergency_call_to_the_international_community_stop_the_forcible_transfer_in_the_west_bank)

<sup>7</sup> Yesh-Din, “Settler Violence,” November 28, 2023, <https://www.yesh-din.org/en/category/settler-violence/>

<sup>8</sup> United Nations, “Human Rights Council Hears that 700,000 Israeli Settlers are Living Illegally in the Occupied West Bank – Meeting Summary (Excerpts),” March 28, 2023, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/human-rights-council-hears-that-700000-israeli-settlers-are-living-illegally-in-the-occupied-west-bank-meeting-summary-excerpts/>

<sup>9</sup> Axios, “U.S. report: Israel often did not prevent settler attacks against Palestinians in 2021,” February 28, 2023, <https://www.axios.com/2023/02/28/settler-attacks-palestinians-west-bank-state>

<sup>10</sup> American Near East Refugee Aid (Anera), <https://www.anera.org/what-are-area-a-area-b-and-area-c-in-the-west-bank/>

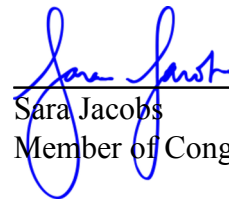
policy targeting individuals who undermine peace, security, or stability in the West Bank, aiming to hold those accountable for acts of violence or actions restricting civilians' access to essential services. We believe that dedicating more attention and resources to the rising challenge of settler violence is essential to prevent further escalation and promote regional stability.

Thank you for your consideration and prompt action on this critical issue.

Sincerely,



Delia C. Ramirez  
Member of Congress



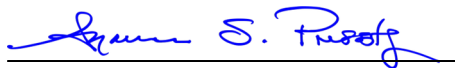
Sara Jacobs  
Member of Congress



Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez  
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



Ayanna Pressley  
Member of Congress



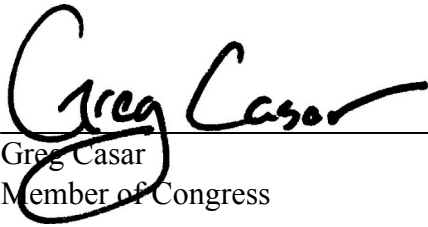
Rashida Tlaib  
Member of Congress



Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.  
Member of Congress

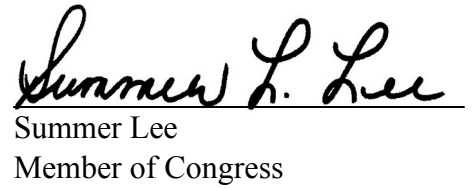


Cori Bush  
Member of Congress



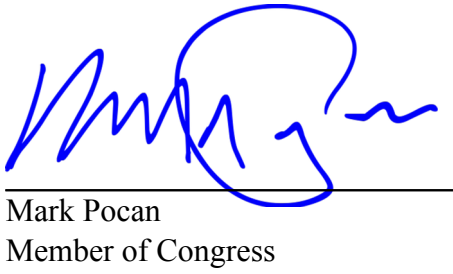
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Greg Casar  
Member of Congress



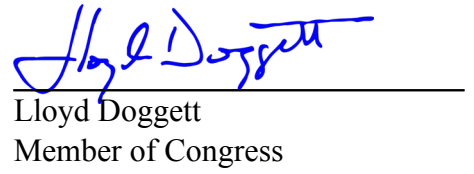
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Summer L. Lee  
Member of Congress



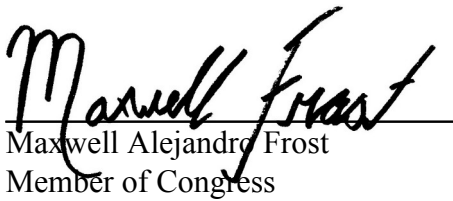
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Mark Pocan  
Member of Congress



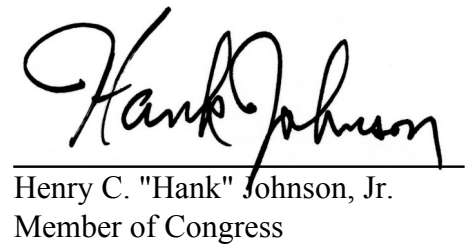
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Lloyd Doggett  
Member of Congress



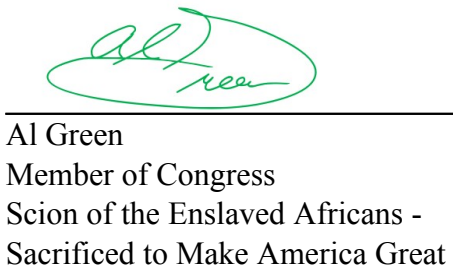
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Maxwell Alejandro Frost  
Member of Congress



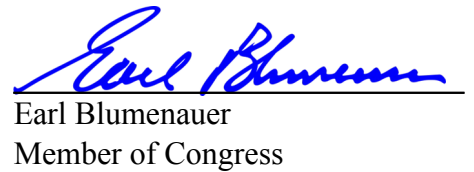
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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.  
Member of Congress



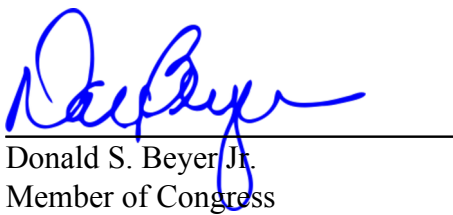
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Al Green  
Member of Congress  
Scion of the Enslaved Africans -  
Sacrificed to Make America Great



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Earl Blumenauer  
Member of Congress




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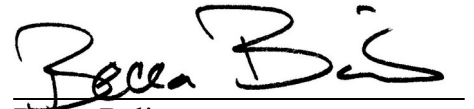
Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress



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André Carson  
Member of Congress

  
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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress

  
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Becca Balint  
Member of Congress