

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 21, 2020

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel
3 Kaplan Street
Kiryat Ben Gurion
Jerusalem, Israel 91919

His Excellency Benjamin Gantz
Minister of Defense
Ministry of Defense
37 Kaplan Street
Tel Aviv, Israel 61909

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu and Defense Minister Gantz,


As American lawmakers who have long supported strong U.S.-Israel ties and a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we write to express our grave concern with provisions in the recently concluded government agreement to consider unilateral annexation of Palestinian territory as early as this July. Such an action would mark a dramatic reversal of decades of shared understandings between the United States, Israel, the Palestinians and the international community, and would have a clear impact on both Israel's future and our vital bilateral and bipartisan relationship.

A deep commitment to Israel's security and a shared set of democratic values are foundational elements of the close relationship between our countries. We are therefore concerned that a unilateral annexation puts both Israel's security and democracy at risk. Annexation would betray our shared democratic values by denying Palestinians' right to self-determination in a viable, sovereign, independent and contiguous state. It could bring an end to Palestinian security cooperation with Israel, directly threatening the security of the Israeli people, and endanger Israel's crucial peace agreement with Jordan.

On the world stage, unilateral annexation will be met with deep concern from our mutual allies and partners, including Jordan and Egypt, and nearly universally viewed as a violation of international law. The formalization of a fragmented and disconnected array of Palestinian islets surrounded by Israeli territory would be rejected by the international community as both unequal and undemocratic. And most concerning, a unilateral annexation outside of a negotiated agreement would likely erode the strong support among the American people for the special relationship and diplomatic partnership with the United States that Israel currently enjoys.

We hope you view this relationship as the strategic asset it is for both of our countries. As friends and supporters of Israel, we caution you against taking unilateral steps that would fray our unique bonds, imperil Israel's future and place out of reach the prospect of a lasting peace. If you move forward with unilateral annexation, we would not support that action. This is consistent with long-standing American policy opposing unilateral actions by either party to the conflict. Pursuit of a viable, negotiated two state solution is essential to ensuring our shared democratic values and lasting bipartisan support for Israel in Congress.

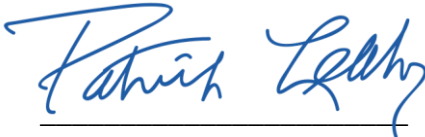
Sincerely,



Christopher S. Murphy
United States Senator

/S/ Chris Van Hollen

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Patrick Leahy
United States Senator



Sherrod Brown
United States Senator



Tom Udall
United States Senator



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



Sheldon Whitehouse
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator



Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

/S/ Martin Heinrich

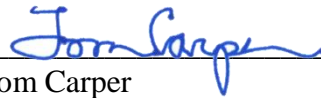
Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



Tom Carper
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator