

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 28, 2022

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

With the return of the United States to the UN Human Rights Council, we think it is time for the American presence on the Council to be used to address major human rights problems around the world. An important step in this regard would be to redirect the wasteful use of funds and personnel on excessive devotion to disparaging Israel to allow the UN Human Rights Council to fairly promote human rights around the world.

We write to urge you to prioritize reversing the UN Human Rights Council's (UNHRC) discriminatory and unwarranted treatment of Israel by leading a multinational effort in the Council and in the UN to end the permanent Commission of Inquiry (COI) on the Israeli Palestinian conflict.

In May 2021, just days after the conflict between the Gaza-based terrorist organization Hamas and Israel, the UNHRC approved an unprecedented open-ended investigation of Israel's treatment of Palestinians, purported war crimes and human rights violations. This Commission will not only focus on the actions Israel took in Gaza as it sought to defend its citizens, it will also have a carte blanche mandate – in perpetuity – to examine any period in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict about violations not only in the West Bank and Gaza, but also within Israel's pre-1967 borders. The mandate made no mention of the 4,300 lethal rockets fired by Hamas toward Israeli civilians in a matter of days and no mention of Israel's right to defend itself.

This one-sided approach is consistent with UNHRC's continuing bias against Israel and the disproportionate use of resources in an ongoing campaign to disparage, discredit and denounce Israel. Its Agenda Item VII is the only country-specific permanent item on the Council's agenda. The COI will now operate with an annual budget of over \$4 million and a permanent staff of 18, which represents considerable resources devoted to maligning and ultimately prosecuting Israel. Of the thirty-two UNHRC mandated investigative probes, nine have been against Israel. By comparison, the investigation of North Korea's violations of the human rights of its people had half the staff and lasted for only a year. Additionally, egregious human rights violations such as the treatment of the Uyghurs in China are not addressed by the UNHRC at all.

We appreciate your commitment to put the Council's "disproportionate focus on Israel" at the top of the Biden Administration's agenda for reforming the Council when the U.S. announced it would seek to rejoin the UNHRC, as well as your commitment to "continue to uphold our strong commitment to Israel and its security, including by opposing actions that seek to target Israel

unfairly.” Delegitimizing and ultimately eliminating this permanent commission is an opportunity for the administration to fulfill U.S. Ambassador Patrick Kennedy’s pledge to the Council that “the U.S. stands with Israel in rejecting the unprecedented open-ended mandate of this Commission of Inquiry, which perpetuates a practice of unfairly singling out Israel in the U.N.”

By unfairly singling out Israel, the UNHRC undermines its credibility to investigate human rights violations around the world.

The COI is the latest endeavor by UNHRC to discredit the only Jewish state and is likely to further fuel antisemitism worldwide. Therefore, we urge you to act upon the Administration’s commitment to defend Israel from discriminatory treatment at the Human Rights Council and throughout the UN system. We also urge the U.S. to firmly raise its voice and concerns during the current UNHRC session, the first meeting in several years in which the United States will be a member of the council.

We thank you in advance for your attention to this matter and look forward to your response.

Sincerely,



Benjamin L. Cardin  
Benjamin L. Cardin  
United States Senator



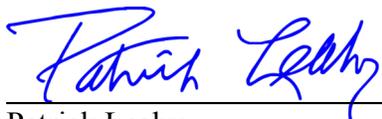
Rob Portman  
Rob Portman  
United States Senator



Charles E. Schumer  
Charles E. Schumer  
United States Senator



James E. Risch  
James E. Risch  
United States Senator



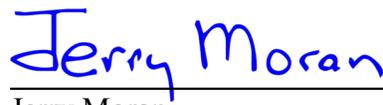
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Patrick Leahy  
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United States Senator



Jacky Rosen  
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Jerry Moran  
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Christopher A. Coons  
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Charles E. Grassley  
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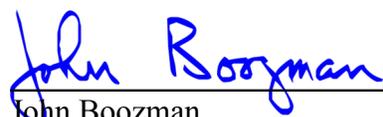
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United States Senator



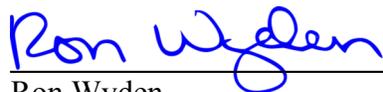
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Margaret Wood Hassan  
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Dan Sullivan  
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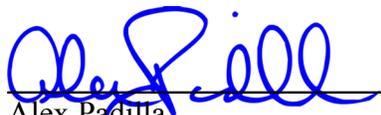
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United States Senator



Kyrsten Sinema  
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Marsha Blackburn  
United States Senator



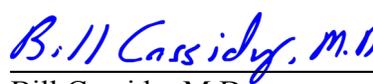
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Tammy Duckworth  
United States Senator



Bill Cassidy, M.D.  
United States Senator



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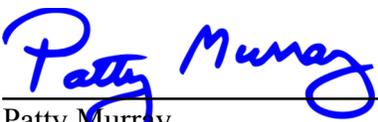
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Dianne Feinstein  
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Shelley Moore Capito  
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Patty Murray  
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Joni K. Ernst  
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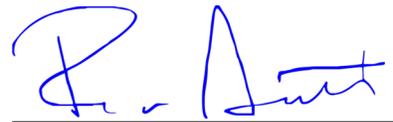
Tim Kaine  
United States Senator



Mike Braun  
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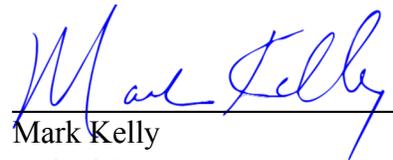
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Mark Kelly  
United States Senator



Deb Fischer  
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United States Senator



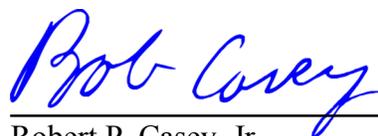
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John Kennedy  
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Amy Klobuchar  
United States Senator



Michael S. Lee  
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Raphael G. Warnock  
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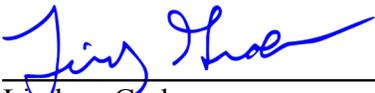
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Steve Daines  
United States Senator



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Kirsten Gillibrand  
United States Senator



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Lindsey Graham  
United States Senator



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Roger F. Wicker  
United States Senator



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Jon Tester  
United States Senator



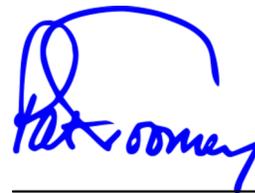
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Todd Young  
United States Senator



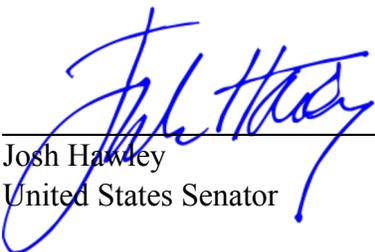
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United States Senator



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Pat Toomey  
United States Senator



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Josh Hawley  
United States Senator



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Tommy Tuberville  
United States Senator



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Michael D. Crapo  
United States Senator



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John Hoeven  
United States Senator