

# Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

July XX, 2010

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton  
Secretary of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Madam Secretary:

We write to express strong opposition to a recent decision by the Department of State to legitimize the “Palestine Liberation Organization” (PLO) by granting further privileges to the PLO’s office in Washington, DC. The PLO has failed to uphold its commitments and responsibilities – including with respect to the operation of its U.S. office. We accordingly request that you reconsider this decision and, instead, fully implement U.S. law by closing the PLO’s U.S. office and moving our embassy in Israel – our vital democratic ally – to Jerusalem.

As you know, the Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987 (Title X of P.L. 100-204, 22 USC 61) states, *inter alia*, that “It shall be unlawful to establish or maintain an office, headquarters, premises, or other facilities or establishments within the jurisdiction of the United States at the behest or direction of, or with funds provided by the Palestine Liberation Organization or any of its constituent groups, any successor to any of those, or any agents thereof.”

Given the PLO’s longstanding failure to uphold its commitments, we have long been disappointed by the decision of successive Administrations – including the present one – to repeatedly waive this provision and keep the PLO’s U.S. office open. The Executive Branch’s refusal to hold the Palestinian leadership accountable has not encouraged improved behavior by Ramallah. To the contrary, unconditional U.S. political and economic support for those leaders has reinforced their irresponsibility and unaccountability.

Palestinian Authority-controlled media continue to disseminate anti-Israel and anti-Semitic incitement. Yet, PA and PLO leader Abu Mazen, in a recent meeting with the President, falsely claimed that “we have nothing to do with incitement against Israel, and we’re not doing that.” Palestinian leaders also have supported and participated in boycotts and burnings of Israeli-made products.

Palestinian leaders continue to demonize and delegitimize Israel in international fora. They opposed and reportedly lobbied against Israel’s successful candidacy for membership in the Organization for Economic Co-operation and Development. Earlier this year, a former PA minister and senior associate of Abu Mazen announced that the PA was intensifying its diplomatic and economic offensive against Israel, with the aims of isolating Israel, preventing it from building its ties with the European Union, and expelling Israel from the UN. Those same Palestinian leaders still reject direct negotiations with the Government of Israel (a stance recently reaffirmed by the PLO Executive Committee and by the “Revolutionary Council” of Fatah, which Abu Mazen also heads).

Palestinian leaders continue glorifying violent extremists that have sought Israel's destruction. For example, Abu Mazen recently expressed condolences to the family of the recently-deceased mastermind of the massacre of Israeli athletes at the 1972 Olympics in Munich, calling that mass-murderer "one of the prominent leaders of the Fatah movement [who] lived a life filled with the struggle, devoted effort, and... enormous sacrifice...". He also reportedly told Arab journalists recently that "We are unable to confront Israel militarily... I turned to the Arab states [at a summit] and I said: 'If you want war, and if all of you will fight Israel, we are in favor. But the Palestinians will not fight alone because they don't have the ability to do it.'"

The PLO's continued association with violent extremism is confirmed by the fact that the Executive Branch, when exercising waivers in order to keep the PLO's U.S. office open, has never exercised the termination clause in the underlying Anti-Terrorism Act of 1987, which is conditioned on "the President certif[y]ing in writing to the President pro tempore of the Senate and the Speaker of the House that the Palestine Liberation Organization, its agents, or constituent groups thereof no longer practice or support terrorist actions anywhere in the world." The fact that no President has ever been able to make that certification to Congress speaks volumes about the true nature and behavior of the PLO.

Finally, the PLO has even failed to meet its responsibilities with respect to the operation of its U.S. office. On June 22, 1994, Ambassador Eric J. Boswell, director of the Department of State's Office of Foreign Missions, wrote a letter to Hasan Abdel Rahman of the "Palestine Affairs Center," setting forth "terms and conditions with which the [PLO] office must comply," and emphasizing that "[i]f the office itself engages in activities which are inconsistent with the established terms and conditions, its ability to continue operations will... be jeopardized."

One of these terms and conditions is that "The office may not portray itself as a diplomatic mission or as representing the 'State of Palestine' or 'Palestine,' with several examples of "prohibited activities" listed under this category, such as that "The head of the office may not portray himself or herself as ambassador or chief of mission." However, the PLO office's website (<http://www.plomission.us>) includes one section titled "Consular Affairs" and another which refers to the head of the office as "The Ambassador," as "Ambassador Maen Rashid Areikat," and as "Chief of the PLO Mission to the US" (please see the attached screen-capture of the website as accessed on July 27, 2010).

State Department spokesman Phillip J. Crowley stated last week, regarding your department's recent concessions to the PLO, that "these steps have symbolic value, they reflect improved relations between the United States and the Palestinians." We see no evidence meriting these concessions nor justifying improvement in relations. This decision, however, certainly is symbolic – in the wrong way. It legitimizes and rewards a corrupt, autocratic, and unaccountable PLO and gives it privileges that could be and have been easily misconstrued as upgraded status and diplomatic recognition – despite your department's repeated affirmations to the contrary.

Madam Secretary, we urge you to reconsider this decision – as well as the longstanding Executive Branch policy of waiving restrictions and sanctions on the PLO under U.S. law. Instead, we ask that you hold the PLO accountable for its behavior. We respectfully request that you fully implement U.S. law by immediately closing the PLO’s U.S. office and barring it from operating on our soil. We further request that you take this opportunity to reaffirm the value of Israel as a steadfast, democratic U.S. ally by moving the U.S. embassy in Israel to the Jewish State’s chosen capital of Jerusalem, in full implementation of the mandate of the Jerusalem Embassy Act of 1995 (P.L. 104-45, 109 Stat. 398).

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, and we look forward to your prompt response.

Sincerely,