

United States Senate

August 5, 2015

President Barack Obama
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear President Obama:

I write to you regarding the February 23, 2015 decision by a jury in a New York Federal District Court to hold the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) and the Palestinian Authority (PA) liable for \$655 million in damages to plaintiffs in the *Sokolow v. PLO* civil suit, in which Americans sued the PLO and the PA for their role in supporting terrorist attacks between 2002 and 2004 that killed and injured Americans. I request that your administration not take any action to reduce or nullify the judgement.

Sokolow v. PLO represents the first successful civil case initiated under the Antiterrorism Act of 1990 (ATA; Public Law 101-519; 18 U.S.C. § 2333). Reports indicate that the PA will appeal the verdict. Additionally, it is my understanding that the PA maintains it is unable pay the \$655 million in damages because it would adversely affect its ability to govern under an already tight budget. I also understand that at the urging of the State Department, the Department of Justice is reviewing this case and will make a determination on potential action within days.

Congress enacted the ATA to create a civil cause of action for any U.S. citizen injured or killed by an act of international terrorism. This law was designed as a civil counterpart to criminal laws prohibiting acts of terrorism. The ATA allows victims of terrorism and their heirs to pursue terrorists in American courts by providing “the remedies of traditional American tort law,” including treble damages, against those who cause injury or death through acts of international terrorism. The ATA is an important mechanism through which terrorists and state sponsors of terrorism can be held accountable. Political efforts to have our government intervene and unduly influence the courts threatens to undermine verdicts such as the one reached in *Sokolow v. PLO*.

Accordingly, I would like to voice my opposition to any such course of action or other government interference with the victims’ legal rights. The ATA is an important piece

of victims' rights legislation, and victims who bring forth claims in good faith and win judgments against terrorists should not be thwarted in their efforts.

Thank you for your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Mark Kirk". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the left.

Mark Kirk
United States Senator

Cc: The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

The Honorable Loretta E. Lynch
Attorney General of the United States
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20530