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Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

Washington, DC 20515-1306

July 20, 2017

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I write to express my concern about numerous mischaracterizations found in the 2016 State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, which undermine the prospect for Israeli-Palestinian peace and wrongly blame Israel for Palestinian terrorism against Israeli civilians. At the highest level, the Palestinian Authority (PA) leadership directly incites, rewards, and, in some cases, carries out, terrorist attacks against innocent Israelis. In order to effectively combat terrorism, it is imperative that the United States accurately characterize its root cause—PA leadership. Just days ago, two Israeli police officers were brutally murdered in a terrorist attack on the Temple Mount—to support efforts to prevent additional attacks in the future, I strongly encourage you to modify the 2016 State Department Country Reports on Terrorism to accurately assess the driving forces behind Palestinian terrorism and hold responsible those in Palestinian leadership whom foster violence against Israeli civilians.

The State Department report includes multiple findings that are both inaccurate and harmful to combating Palestinian terrorism. This report wrongly insinuates Israeli security measures on the Temple Mount and a stalled peace process as key forces behind terrorism. Most egregiously, it portrays the PA as innocent peacemakers far removed being the source of terrorist activity. The report states, “explicit calls for violence against Israelis, direct exhortations against Jews, and categorical denials by the PA of the possibility of peace with Israel are rare and the leadership does not generally tolerate it.” This assertion is demonstrably false. The PA does not only tolerate terrorist attacks against Israelis but it also incites, rewards, and memorializes those who carry out these horrific attacks.

During the last major wave of Palestinian terrorism which began in September 2015 and continues today, Palestinian terrorists executed 181 stabbing attacks, 159 shootings, and 60 vehicular ramming attacks, which killed over 50 Israelis and injured nearly 1000. President Abbas, who deemed this terror wave a “peaceful uprising,” was a key supporter of these heinous attacks. On September 16, 2016 he stated on Palestinian TV, “*We welcome every drop of blood*

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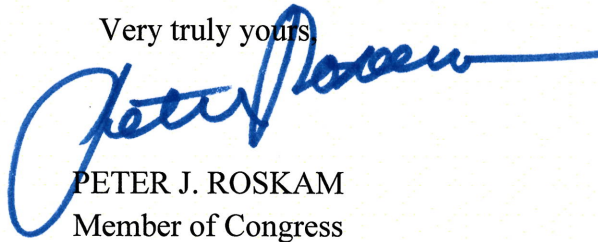
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spilled in Jerusalem. This is pure blood, clean blood, blood on its way to Allah. With the help of Allah, every martyr will be in heaven, and every wounded will get his reward." President Abbas has innocent Israeli blood on his hands. Unfortunately, these remarks are excluded in this year's State Department report, minimizing his share of responsibility for violence against Israelis. President Abbas should be held accountable for his incitement of terrorism.

The PA also incentivizes terrorism by paying salaries to those arrested for killing and maiming Israelis. In 2016, PA payments to terrorists and their families reached \$315 million dollars, nearly 10 percent of the PA budget. The family of Bashar Masalha, who brutally killed U.S. Army veteran Taylor Force last year is among the recipients of these payments. By continuing to reward the family Palestinian terrorists, the PA is directly responsible for breeding the next generation of terrorists. By word and deed, the PA is responsible for the heinous violence against Israelis which serves as a core barrier to advancing Israeli-Palestinian peace.

In light of these numerous harmful mischaracterizations throughout the 2016 State Department Country Reports on Terrorism, I strongly encourage you to modify this report to accurately characterize and hold accountable the root causes of Palestinian violence—PA leadership, and clarify the longstanding issue of Palestinian support for terrorism as the leading impediment to Israeli-Palestinian peace.

Very truly yours,



PETER J. ROSKAM
Member of Congress

cc: Mr. Jason Greenblatt, Special Representative for International Negotiations
Mr. Jared Kushner, Senior Advisor to the President