

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 27, 2020

The Honorable Mike Pompeo
Secretary of State
Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Pompeo,

We write to request that the State Department immediately reinstate assistance to Palestinian civilians, already appropriated by Congress in FY2020, through established funding channels to help the beleaguered health system confront the coronavirus pandemic. The President's outreach to North Korea and Iran is a welcome signal that the Administration is able to put politics aside in the interest of assisting vulnerable populations in need during this global health crisis.

On March 22, the Palestinian health ministry announced the first two COVID-19 cases in Gaza. The demands of the pandemic threaten to overwhelm the already-stretched health system in Gaza. Of the 144 health clinics operated by the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestine Refugees (UNRWA), 22 provide essential health services to 70 percent of Gazans. Even before the pandemic, UNRWA was already confronting the possibility of having to reduce its services due to the enduring impacts of U.S. funding cuts and has recently called on donor states for an additional \$14 million to address immediate priorities created by the pandemic. There is currently no alternative to UNRWA's health care system in Gaza, the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, Syria, Jordan, and Lebanon.

We welcome the coordinated Palestinian Authority and Israeli government response to the pandemic. The six hospitals comprising the East Jerusalem Hospital Network provide the most advanced medical services to Palestinians living in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. However, as with UNRWA, the ability of the hospitals to prepare for and respond to the expected rise in COVID-19 cases is hampered by lack the funds to fully execute this critical mission.

The United States has traditionally provided financial support to UNRWA and the East Jerusalem Hospital Network. In order to help them meet the needs of their beneficiary populations in combating the coronavirus, and thereby helping to reduce its spread to Israel and neighboring countries, we request that the Administration provide funding for UNRWA, other U.S. based international NGOs responding to the health crisis, and the hospital network through the Economic Support Funds (ESF) and Migration and Refugee Assistance (MRA) accounts.

We appreciate your consideration of this request for critical, life-saving funding for the people of Israel and Palestine.

Sincerely,



Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Don Beyer
Member of Congress

Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Betty McCollum
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

John Yarmuth
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David Price
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Gerald E. Connolly
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Barbara Lee
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Gwen S. Moore
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Jan Schakowsky
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Peter Welch
Member of Congress