

To the Protestors Defending Israeli Democracy:

As Members of Congress and friends of Israel, we write to voice our support and admiration for the groundswell of pro-democracy activism in Israel in recent months. Through peaceful protests and strikes, you have delayed the advancement of Prime Minister Netanyahu's extreme plan to eviscerate the independence of the Israeli judiciary, and we're hopeful that through continued activism, you will stop it once and for all.

Along with so many of you and with our own constituents, we've watched with dismay as the governing coalition has forged ahead with judicial overhaul legislation that would do profound harm to Israel's democratic institutions. The legislation gives the governing coalition control over critical judicial appointments, enables the Knesset to overturn Supreme Court decisions with a simple majority vote, ends judicial review of Israel's Basic Laws by the Supreme Court, and sharply curtails the Court's ability to review other laws. If enacted, this proposal would virtually eliminate the checks and balances that are crucial to maintaining a healthy democracy.

We're deeply concerned that this legislation will corrode Israel's democratic character and, in doing so, strain the critical relationship between Israel and the United States. Since Israel's founding in 1948, the American people have consistently embraced Israel as the only democracy in the Middle East and supported close cooperation between our two countries. This cooperation has been rooted in our shared democratic values such as individual freedoms, human rights, and the rule of law. The judicial overhaul legislation will undermine these shared principles that form the foundation of our strong economic, diplomatic, and security partnerships.

An independent judiciary is a key element of democracy, and one that is essential to protecting the rights of minorities and marginalized communities. The undermining of the Israeli judiciary's independence is likely to threaten the civil liberties of Israel's Palestinian Arab citizens. Additionally, weakening the Supreme Court will render it unable to constrain further entrenchment of the occupation of the West Bank, and in particular, the confiscation of Palestinian property and "regularization" of settlement outposts that are illegal under both Israeli and international law. Not only will this lead to devastating consequences for Palestinian civilians, it is also likely to exacerbate tensions in the region, further undermine the viability of a two-state solution, and jeopardize the progress made by the Abraham Accords.

As Israel celebrates the 75th anniversary of its founding, we proudly stand with you, the Israeli non-violent, pro-democracy movement, as you fight to preserve Israel's democratic character and ensure that the rule of law prevails. While we confront challenges to our democracy at home, we admire the fortitude you have shown in facing down efforts to erode Israeli democracy. We share your belief that a strong, vibrant democracy with an independent judiciary is essential to Israel's future success and the success of the U.S.-Israel relationship. We also share your hope that the Netanyahu government will listen to the concerns of its citizens, the military, and the international community, and abandon this dangerous legislation.