

THE SECRETARY OF STATE
WASHINGTON

April 9, 2012

The Honorable Ileana Ros-Lehtinen
Chairman
Committee on Foreign Affairs
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Chairman Ros-Lehtinen:

Thank you for your March 23, 2012, letter regarding U.S. assistance to the Palestinian people. The Administration has decided to move forward with the funding contained in USAID CN# 133, sent to Congress over eight months ago, on August 18, 2011.

For decades, whether Congress and the Administration were Republican or Democratic, America has pursued the goal of a just and comprehensive Mideast peace. Since President George W. Bush first formally called for the creation of a Palestinian state, our policy has focused on assisting the Palestinian Authority in building the institutions necessary for that future state, living in peace side by side with a secure, democratic, Jewish state of Israel. Progress in this direction depends upon helping Palestinian moderates prove to their own people that their approach can deliver concrete, life-improving results. That requires resources. Israeli political and military leaders have reaffirmed that economic progress, delivered by moderate Palestinian leaders, is essential to preventing a deterioration of conditions on the ground and to maintaining stability and security for Israelis and Palestinians alike. That, too, requires resources. In addition, U.S. and international assistance gives vulnerable civilians in Gaza an alternative to Hamas. For all these reasons, full funding for USAID programs in the West Bank and Gaza is crucial to America's pursuit of peace and security.

The remaining \$147 million of FY2011 Economic Support Funds delivers critical support to the Palestinian people and those leaders seeking to combat extremism within their society and build a more sustainable future. These programs include support for infant intensive care units at Palestinian hospitals; education funds that would reach one in nine Palestinian teachers to help prepare a new generation for peaceful coexistence; World Food Program rations, which have

been cut by 33 percent absent sufficient FY2011 funds; and infrastructure funds that would provide piped water for the first time to more than 10,000 Palestinians. We take painstaking measures to monitor how U.S. taxpayer dollars are spent. None of these programs empowers extremists. Cancelling them, however, would.

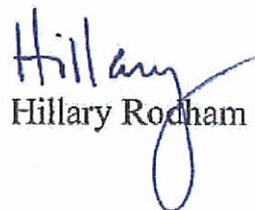
Each of these programs makes good on the promise that moderate Palestinian leaders can deliver results, as do Palestinian road construction, scholarships for Palestinian students, and trade facilitation projects to hasten the day when Palestinians no longer need U.S. assistance. All are currently diminished or delayed. Should funding for these initiatives not arrive, our programs would face layoffs and costly contract cancellations. A halt would risk undermining the progress that has been made in recent years in building Palestinian institutions and improving stability, security and economic prospects – which benefits Israelis and Palestinians alike.

For eight months beyond the expiration of the statutorily required notification period, we have delayed this important support out of consideration for ongoing congressional inquiries and our commitment to comity with Members. We have addressed – fully and in detail – your requests for additional relevant information. All other relevant legislative considerations also have been addressed. The chairpersons and ranking members of the other three committees we are required to notify have confirmed that we are free to obligate the full amount of the funds notified in this CN. We therefore are moving forward to obligate the full amount of the notification.

We will continue to respect Congress' prerogatives regarding foreign assistance funding and to provide information and listen to members' views. We will also continue to pursue policies that support Middle East peace, empower Palestinian moderates, and enjoy the support of Israelis, Palestinians, and the United States Congress.

I sincerely regret that we disagree on this matter and want to emphasize our continued desire for a productive and constructive working relationship with you and the House Committee on Foreign Affairs. Please feel free to contact me with any questions or concerns.

Sincerely yours,


Hillary Rodham Clinton