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United States Senate

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN RELATIONS

WASHINGTON, DC 20510-6225

June 9, 2021

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden:

I understand that your administration is conducting a review with the goal to re-open the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) office in the United States that was shuttered under the Trump Administration. I strongly believe that such a reopening undermines U.S. interests, turns a blind eye to victims of Palestinian-sponsored terrorism, and will make necessary changes in Palestinian conduct less likely.

As you know, the Palestinian Authority (PA) and PLO continue to incentivize and celebrate violence against Israelis through the egregious “pay to slay” program. In 2019 alone, the Palestinians spent \$151 million to support imprisoned terrorists and their families. In addition to these prisoner payments, the PA and PLO maintain a “martyrs’ fund” that supports the families of terrorists killed while committing acts of violence. Instead of normalizing this appalling practice through deeper relations with the PA and PLO, your administration should instead pursue changes in Palestinian policies that glorify violence and terrorism.

In addition to Palestinian policies that incentivize violence, the legal requirements under the 1987 Anti-Terrorism Act (ATA), and the 2019 Promoting Security and Justice for Victims of Terrorism Act (PSJVTA) are clear. The 1987 ATA specifically states that “the PLO and its affiliates are a terrorist organization and a threat to the interests of the United States, its allies, and to international law and should not benefit from operating in the United States.”

There is also the matter of Palestinian elections. Originally scheduled for May, Mahmoud Abbas has sought yet another delay over fears Hamas would defeat his Fatah party at the polls. Hamas remains a designated foreign terrorist organization, and the potential for it to fully take over Palestinian governance remains a compelling reason to avoid opening an office in the United States.

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The United States is rightly skeptical of the PA's and PLO's compliance with its commitments, and the American people deserve transparency on this important issue. I look forward to consultations with the administration on this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "J. Risch". The signature is stylized and cursive.

JAMES E. RISCH

Ranking Member

Senate Foreign Relations Committee

CC: The Honorable Antony J. Blinken, Secretary, U.S. Department of State