

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

November 1, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken  
United States Secretary of State  
The State Department  
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

As strong supporters of the US-Israel relationship, we watched in horror on October 7th as Hamas mounted a heinous terror attack against Israel, killing more than 1,400 Israelis. We thank you for your leadership during this time. The conversations you've had with leaders in the Middle East have been critical in addressing the humanitarian crisis and helping to secure the release of the hostages.

However, as Jake Sullivan stated rightly, it is the responsibility of the Israeli government to “rein in” extremist settlers in the Israeli-occupied West Bank, saying that “it is totally unacceptable to have extremist settler violence against innocent people in the West Bank.”

Recent reports from October 28th have drawn our attention to a disturbing incident in which settlers, possibly accompanied by Israel Defense Forces personnel, attacked the residents of the Palestinian community of Susya in the South Hebron Hills. It's our understanding that settlers also threatened the village with an ultimatum to evacuate within 24 hours or face further violence and intimidation.

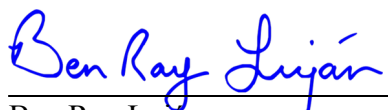
We personally visited Susya earlier this year and were deeply moved by the villagers' stories of displacement, of ongoing deprivation of resources and of intimidation by neighboring settlers. As one of the largest unrecognized Palestinian communities in the Masafer Yatta region, Susya has received significant international attention and support in the face of similar threats and attacks.

We are profoundly concerned that the forced displacement of Susya would further embolden violent settler attacks and intimidation against the surrounding communities. Since the Israel-Hamas War began, there has been a growing number of incidents in which settlers have been documented attacking nearby Palestinian communities, at times escorted by Israeli soldiers. These actions endanger the possibility of a two-state solution.

Therefore, we urge you to immediately and strongly convey to the Israeli government its responsibility to uphold the rule of law in the West Bank and protect civilians under its jurisdiction, while holding perpetrators of these attacks to account. The destabilizing impact of such continued violence and further displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank threatens to

expand the current war to another devastating front. We echo President Biden's concern that attacks by "extremist settlers" amounts to "pouring gasoline" on the already burning fires in the region.

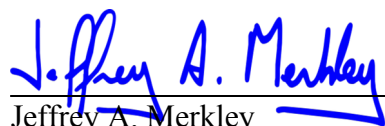
Sincerely,



Ben Ray Lujan  
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen  
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley  
United States Senator