

## **CARDIN-COLLINS LETTER**

March 19, 2013

Dear Mr. President:

We applaud your decision to travel to Israel so early in your second term as president. Your upcoming trip will offer you the opportunity to meet with the leaders of Israel's new government and to reaffirm the unshakeable bond between our two nations. In your meetings in Jerusalem and Ramallah later this month, we hope that you will reaffirm your commitment to working closely with the new government of Israel.

As you may know, in May 2011, the Senate passed S.Res.185: a resolution reaffirming the commitment of the United States to a negotiated two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The bipartisan resolution was cosponsored by 90 Senators. Palestinian efforts to bypass direct negotiations with Israel by taking unilateral steps for international recognition are, in our view, unacceptable. When you meet with Palestinian leaders, you should make clear that the pathway for peace is through unconditional direct negotiations between both the Israelis and Palestinians and that the United States vigorously opposes any Palestinian efforts to circumvent direct negotiations.

It is important to re-emphasize that the United States will not tolerate efforts to isolate or delegitimize Israel. During your first term, you and your administration actively stood by Israel at the UN and other agencies to try to block such efforts. It is critical that you now make clear that our relationship with Palestinians will be jeopardized by seeking action against Israel at the International Criminal Court.

We encourage you to also stress the importance of the Palestinian Authority's close security cooperation with Israel. If peace is to be possible, the Palestinian Authority also needs to confront the recent surge in violence on the West Bank, cease all anti-Israel incitement and renounce Hamas until it unequivocally meets the three Quartet requirements.

We believe that by espousing these principles during your historic trip, you will reaffirm the United States' commitment to enhancing Israeli security, improving the prospect for peace with the Palestinians and furthering our own interests in this troubled region of the world.

We are strongly committed to the restart of the peace process between Israel and the Palestinians. However, we also recognize that the violence and chaos that have sprung up in Syria, North Africa, Egypt, including insecurity along the Sinai Peninsula, and Yemen are not directly related to the peace process.

As you pursue peace in the Middle East in the long-run, we hope that your agenda will identify policy solutions to address the urgent and important threats facing Israel and the United States today. We also hope that you will reiterate the United States' support for Israel, her right

to defend herself, and the Iron Dome project. In such a tumultuous region of the world, and during such challenging times, a strong relationship between our two countries has never been more important. Israel has challenging times ahead. Israel needs our unwavering commitment now more than ever.

Sincerely,