

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

June 3, 2024

The Honorable Anthony J. Blinken
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C. St., NW
Washington DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We are writing to express grave concern and alarm over the deteriorating situation in the West Bank. While your administration is rightly focusing its attention on the situation in Gaza, emboldened settlers in the West Bank, supported by the Israeli military, are exploiting the situation to take more Palestinian land in the area. This taking is part of a system of confiscation which will make any contiguous geography for a Palestinian State impossible. We affirm your decision to sanction several Israeli settlers for their ongoing harassment of Palestinians. However, to put a halt to it will take much more than the sanctioning of individual settlers or military units engaged in outright physical violence against Palestinian communities and individuals.

The Tent of Nations, a 100-acre farm located outside Bethlehem, is a textbook case of the ways in which the military occupation of the West Bank is moving intentionally to confiscate the land of Palestinian farmers. Since the State declared their farm as “state land” in 1991, the Nassar family have been subjected to what the Israeli human rights group B’tselem has called a “bureaucracy of violence”¹ which has delayed the re-registration of their land as private property for 34 years. Access to and use of their land over those years has been harrowing and dangerous – only increasingly so following October 7th.

Since October 7th, The Nassar family have endured an increase in threatening actions by the Israeli military and settlers – a pattern of behavior that has been used in a variety of locations throughout the West Bank in attempts to drive Palestinian farmers off their land and to expand the Israeli settlements. These tactics include: additional large roadblocks denying access to the land from the main road, which makes it more difficult for the family to reach their farm; the creation of two outposts close to the Nassar’s farm; the installation of a watch tower with lights; the development of two new roads which if completed will reduce the amount of land the family can access safely; the imposition of a closed military zone which will be used to deny access to a parcel of land used primarily for agricultural purposes.

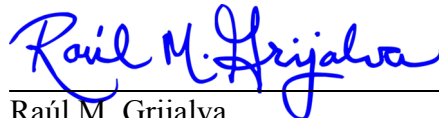
The ownership of the Nassars’ land is clear and well documented. The escalation of activity directed at their property by the military and settlers heightens the urgency for these delays to end and a just outcome for the family to be secured: that is, completion of the re-registration process recognizing their ownership of all their land, and their right to access and farm it. This is about more than one plot of land. The protection of this farm will protect the Palestinian village of Nahalin – with some 9,000 inhabitants – which sits just to the west of the farm. We have grave concerns that should the Nassar land be confiscated it will further isolate Palestinians in the village of Nahalin and pave the way for increased settlement presence. This is a matter of the U.S.’ commitment to equal rights for all, and the rule of law.

We ask you to continue to engage with the Israeli authorities on the re-registration of the Nassar family property. Specifically, we ask you to:

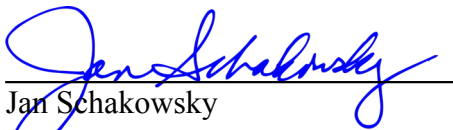
1. Let the authorities know that you are following this case closely, and that the next hearing on July 2nd must be held, and a decision made to confirm the re-registration of the family's land.
2. Request the Office of Palestinian Affairs to make every effort to be present at the hearing, and if refused entry to question the reasoning given for the denial.
3. Question the imposition of a closed military zone between the two parcels of their land which prevents the family from crossing to their land to work it.
4. Do your utmost to see that settler and IDF violence, and intimidation toward the Nassar family, and toward all Palestinians in the West Bank, is stopped.

The United States must remain committed, as you have stated on many occasions, to a future in which all Israelis and Palestinians live in peace with equal rights, dignity, and freedom. We ask you to uplift these concerns to demonstrate the Biden administration's commitment to this end.

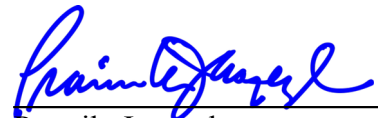
Sincerely,



Raúl M. Grijalva
Member of Congress



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



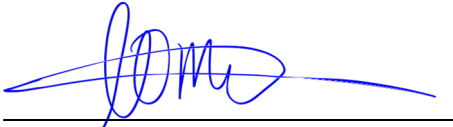
Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



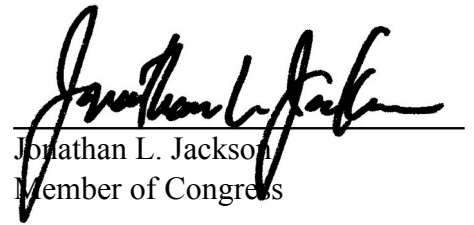
Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress

Cc:

Deputy Secretary of State Kurt M. Campbell

Deputy Assistant Secretary of State for Israel-Palestinian Affairs Andrew P. Miller

ⁱ https://www.btselem.org/download/200809_access_denied_eng.pdf