

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Ambassador Ron Dermer
Embassy of Israel
3514 International Drive NW
Washington, D.C. 20008

April 25, 2018

Dear Ambassador Dermer:

As you know, the humanitarian crisis in the Gaza territory is quickly worsening, with nearly 1 million Gaza residents now dependent on emergency food assistance, in large part due to a decade-old land, sea and air blockade.¹ As U.S. Representatives, we write you with an urgent request to allow those members that are interested to enter the Gaza Strip to fulfill our duties to oversee the appropriate and effective use of U.S. taxpayer dollars allocated to humanitarian aid for Palestinians living in Gaza.

In addition to nearly half of Gaza's 2 million inhabitants being unemployed and on food assistance, the United Nations has reported that "Gaza's only water source will be depleted, and irreversibly so by 2020, unless immediate remedial action is taken".² Furthermore, the provision of electricity remains well below what is needed to provide critical services, like health care and wastewater treatment.

U.S. assistance provided through the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) and USAID serves not only a humanitarian purpose but a security function as well. Israel Defense Forces Chief of Staff Gadi Eisenkot has favored increased aid to Gaza, noting that if the humanitarian crisis in Gaza is not alleviated, spiraling economic and social conditions in Gaza could threaten Israel's security.³

In 2016, we sought to enter Gaza, but the Israeli Coordination and Liaison Administration to the Gaza Strip denied our entrance request, which was made through the UNRWA Gaza field office. We were there to observe and evaluate the humanitarian work funded by the United States in Gaza. You may recall that we were not pleased with our entry request being denied without justification and how this obstructed of our obligation to exercise oversight over U.S. tax dollars.

Given the current situation in Gaza, our attention is required now more than ever. We can think of no reason to deny us access to Gaza again, short of making sure that outside officials not see the worsening conditions. With that, we respectfully request that the Israeli government expedite and approve our request to enter the Gaza Strip for the purpose of observing and evaluating the U.S.-financed humanitarian work. We look forward to your prompt reply.

Sincerely,



Mark Pocan
Member of Congress



Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress



Henry "Hank" C. Johnson
Member of Congress

¹ https://www.unrwa.org/sites/default/files/content/resources/2018_opt_ea_fact_sheet_v4.pdf

² https://unsco.unmissions.org/sites/default/files/gaza_10_years_later_-_11_july_2017.pdf

³ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/idf-chief-said-to-warn-gaza-war-likely-if-humanitarian-crisis-persists/>