

Congress of the United States

House of Representatives

COMMITTEE ON OVERSIGHT AND ACCOUNTABILITY

2157 RAYBURN HOUSE OFFICE BUILDING

WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6143

MAJORITY (202) 225-5074
MINORITY (202) 225-5051
<https://oversight.house.gov>

October 24, 2023

The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development
1300 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20004

Dear Administrator Power,

The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is conducting oversight of how the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) assesses the risk of funding and other agency actions that may support activities contrary to U.S. interests. This includes assessments and controls for hundreds of millions of dollars of U.S. taxpayer-funded humanitarian aid to Gaza and the West Bank and the risk that any of these funds could fall into the hands of or otherwise aid Foreign Terrorist Organizations (FTOs) such as Hamas. The scale and complexity of the barbaric Hamas atrocities that commenced on October 7th in Israel make it clear that significant financial resources were used for these attacks. Public reports state that the Islamic Republic of Iran provides Hamas with direct funding, amounting to tens of millions annually.¹ We also know that the Biden Administration dramatically increased funding to Gaza and the West Bank and on October 18th, he publicly announced an additional \$100 million in U.S. aid to the area.² It is vital to fully account for U.S. funds intended for humanitarian purposes to ensure they do not directly or indirectly fund terrorism. We request information to assist the Committee's oversight.

In the years prior to President Biden assuming office, funding administered by the U.S. Agency for International Development (USAID) to Gaza and the West Bank waned due in part to a recognition of the difficulties ensuring that U.S. aid did not end up in the hands of FTOs or affiliated individuals. Specifically, USAID funding to the region during this time decreased from \$286 million (FY2017) to approximately \$18 million (FY2020).³ Upon taking office, however, President Biden reversed course, and in April of 2021 announced that his administration would send \$235 million in Palestinian aid, to include \$75 million in economic

¹ Joby Warrick et al., *Hamas received weapons and training from Iran, officials say*, WASH. POST (October 9, 2023).

² Jim Zanotti, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., *THE PALESTINIANS: OVERVIEW, AID, AND U.S. POLICY ISSUES* (May 24, 2023) (noting the Biden Administration increased funding to Gaza and the West Bank); Kelly Garrity, *Biden announces \$100 million in humanitarian aid to Gaza and West Bank*, POLITICO (Oct. 18, 2023) (reporting on the \$100 million humanitarian aid package to Gaza and the West Bank).

³ U.S. AGENCY FOR INT'L DEV., OFFICE OF INSPECTOR GEN., *WEST BANK AND GAZA: USAID DID NOT DOCUMENT ITS DELIBERATIVE PROCESS FOR IDENTIFYING AND ASSESSING RISKS IN PROGRAMMING* (Sep. 18, 2023).

and development assistance in Gaza and the West Bank.⁴ The Biden Administration also reversed the previous administration's decision to halt funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency for Palestinian Refugees in the Near East (UNRWA),⁵ claiming to have received commitments from UNRWA to enhance transparency and address concerns regarding antisemitism.⁶ The April, 2021 announcement included \$150 million in humanitarian assistance for UNRWA.

According to records produced by the State Department in response to a Freedom of Information Act request, the State Department was concerned in 2021 about U.S. assistance falling into the hands of Hamas. One draft memo from the State Department to the Department of the Treasury stated:

“Due to its overall strength and level of control over Gaza, we assess there is a high risk Hamas could potentially derive indirect, unintentional benefit from U.S. assistance to Gaza. There is less but still some risk U.S. assistance would benefit other designated groups.”⁷

This concern—that Hamas would derive a benefit from U.S. humanitarian assistance—is consistent with that raised in a March 2021 report by the U.S. Government Accountability Office (GAO) that USAID was not fully able to ensure that programming going to the West Bank and Gaza was not inadvertently reaching FTOs and affiliated individuals.⁸

The most recent atrocities committed by Hamas have resulted in significant and rising numbers of deaths and injuries, including dozens of American casualties and hostages.⁹ This episode underscores the critical importance of ensuring aid funds do not inadvertently increase financial support for terrorist activity. If U.S. taxpayer dollars are financing terrorist activity, the Biden Administration must cease such aid in order to protect Americans and our allies.

To assist the Committee in its oversight of the risk that U.S. aid funds are diverted to assist terrorist activities in Gaza and the West Bank, please provide the following documents and information, covering the time period January 1, 2020, to the present unless otherwise indicated, no later than November 7, 2023:

⁴ Ewan Palmer, *Joe Biden Overturned Trump Policy to Give Palestinians \$235M in Aid*, NEWSWEEK (Oct. 9, 2023).

⁵ Matt Spetalnick & Stephen Farrell, *U.S. restores assistance for Palestinians, to provide \$235 million in aid*, REUTERS (Apr. 7, 2021).

⁶ Ron Kampeas, *Biden Administration Says it has UNRWA's Commitment to 'Zero Tolerance' for anti-Semitism*, FORWARD (Apr. 13, 2021).

⁷ Draft Memo from Andrew Weinschenk, Director, Office of Threat Finance Countermeasures, U.S. Dep't of State to Brad Smith, Acting Director, Office of Foreign Assets Control, Dep't of the Treasury (Mar. 1, 2021), available at <https://freebeacon.com/wp-content/uploads/2023/08/FL-2022-00043-June-2023-Production.pdf>.

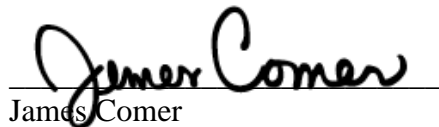
⁸ See U.S. GOV'T ACCOUNTABILITY OFF., GAO-21-332, WEST BANK AND GAZA AID: SHOULD FUNDING RESUME, INCREASED OVERSIGHT OF SUBAWARDEE COMPLIANCE WITH USAID'S ANTITERRORISM POLICIES AND PROCEDURES MAY REDUCE RISKS (Mar. 29, 2021).

⁹ Jennifer Hansler, *Confirmed US death toll in Israel rises to 30*, CNN (Oct. 15, 2023).

1. All documents and communications containing any report or assessment that U.S. funding administered by USAID in Gaza or the West Bank was diverted for use by FTOs, including but not limited to Hamas, or affiliated individuals;
2. All documents and communications related to any concern or assessment that U.S. funding administered by USAID in Gaza or the West Bank could be diverted for use by FTOs, including but not limited to Hamas, or affiliated individuals;
3. All documents, including calendar information, meeting notes, and participant information, regarding the Management Committees on Risk and Internal Control (MCRIC) that oversaw risk profile development for USAID West Bank and Gaza programming for Fiscal Years 2021, 2022, and 2023;
4. All documents related to West Bank and Gaza programming in Fiscal Years 2021, 2022, 2023, which reference Hamas, or any other designated FTO.

To arrange for delivery of responsive documents or ask any related follow-up questions, please contact the Committee on Oversight and Accountability Majority staff at (202) 225-5074. Attached are instructions for producing the documents and information to the Committee. The Committee on Oversight and Accountability is the principal oversight committee of the U.S. House of Representatives and has broad authority to investigate “any matter” at “any time” under House Rule X. Thank you in advance for your cooperation with this inquiry.

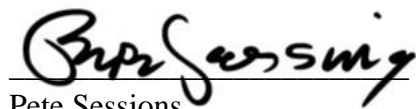
Sincerely,



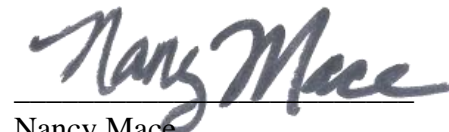
James Comer
Chairman
Committee on Oversight and Accountability



Glenn Grothman
Chairman
Subcommittee on National Security,
the Border, and Foreign Affairs



Pete Sessions
Chairman
Subcommittee on Government Operations
and the Federal Workforce



Nancy Mace
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity,
Information Technology, and
Government Innovation



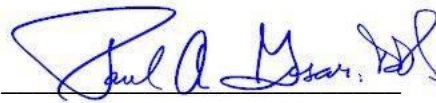
Pat Fallon
Chairman
Subcommittee on Economic Growth,
Energy Policy, and
Regulatory Affairs



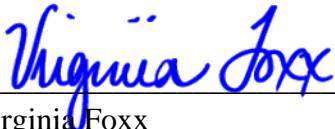
Lisa McClain
Chairwoman
Subcommittee on Health Care and
Financial Services



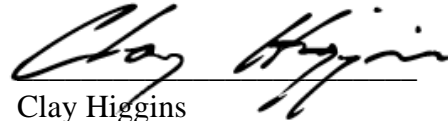
Michael R. Turner
Member of Congress



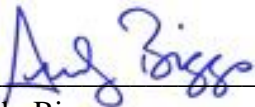
Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Member of Congress



Virginia Foxx
Member of Congress



Clay Higgins
Member of Congress



Andy Biggs
Member of Congress



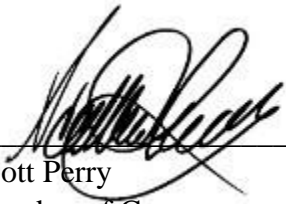
Jake LaTurner
Member of Congress



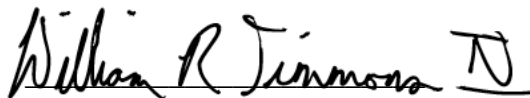
Byron Donalds
Member of Congress



Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress



Scott Perry
Member of Congress



William R. Timmons, IV
Member of Congress

The Honorable Samantha Power

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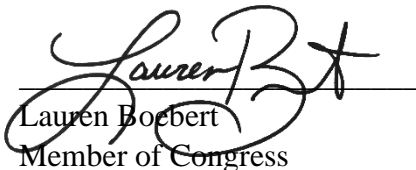
Page 5 of 5



Tim Burchett
Member of Congress



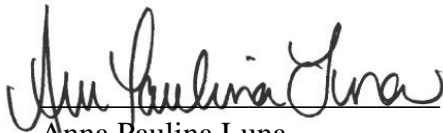
Marjorie Taylor Greene
Member of Congress



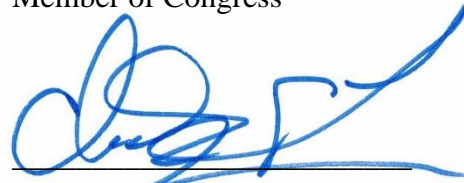
Lauren Boebert
Member of Congress



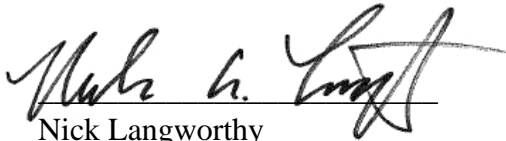
Russell Fry
Member of Congress



Anna Paulina Luna
Member of Congress



Chuck Edwards
Member of Congress



Nick Langworthy
Member of Congress



Eric Burlison
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Jamie B. Raskin, Ranking Member
Committee on Oversight and Accountability

The Honorable Robert Garcia, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on National Security, the Border, and Foreign Affairs

The Honorable Kweisi Mfume, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Government Operations and the Federal Workforce

The Honorable Gerald Connolly, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Cybersecurity, Information Technology, and Government Innovation

The Honorable Cori Bush, Rankin Member
Subcommittee on Economic Growth, Energy Policy, and Regulatory Affairs

The Honorable Katie Porter, Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Health Care and Financial Services