

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

December 9, 2014

The Honorable David S. Cohen
Under Secretary for Terrorism and Financial Intelligence
Department of the Treasury
1500 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, D.C. 20220

Dear Under Secretary Cohen:

We would like to take this opportunity to recognize and commend the efforts of the Department of Treasury to hamper the ability of Hamas – a U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization – to raise and move money, as well as its efforts to sanction entities controlled by Hamas, and designate senior Hamas officials on the Specially Designated Nationals List (SDN). On September 9, 2014, the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade convened a joint subcommittee hearing entitled “Hamas’ Benefactors: A Network of Terror”. While we recognize that Treasury’s designations have taken a toll on the operations of this terrorist organization, we believe that more can be done, and we urge Treasury to take all necessary measures to sanction individuals or entities that are directly or indirectly financing or materially supporting Hamas.

As you know, Hamas traditionally relied on Iran for much of its financial and political support. However, others in the region have stepped up to provide support for Hamas. Qatar’s \$400 million donation for Gaza reconstruction in 2012 bolstered Hamas’ credibility in Gaza and may have directly supported Hamas-backed entities. Qatar also allows Hamas’ top leader, politburo chief Khalid Mishaal, to operate out of its territory knowingly and with impunity. It was even widely reported in the press that Qatar threatened to deport Mishaal if Hamas had accepted an Egypt-backed ceasefire agreement to end this summer’s conflict in Gaza.

We are concerned about the ties between Qatar and Hamas, and we commend you on your speech before the Center for a New American Security, where you stated that, “Qatar, a longtime U.S. ally, has for many years openly financed Hamas,” and that press reports indicate that the Qatari government is also “supporting extremist groups operating in Syria,” further adding to the instability of the region. As you noted in your speech, there are private fundraising networks in Qatar that solicit donations for terrorists. Qatar, in your words, is “a permissive terrorist financing environment.”

We are also concerned about Turkey’s continued support for Hamas. Turkey serves as the headquarters for Saleh al-Aroui, who is believed to head Hamas’ terrorist operations in the West Bank. In August, the media reported that he was behind an allegedly thwarted plot to topple, undermine, or replace the Palestinian Authority government in the West Bank. Also in August, al-Aroui stated that Hamas was behind the kidnapping and murder of three Israeli teens this June.

In addition to Hamas figures that knowingly and openly operate in Turkey, numerous charities, front companies and possibly even banks provide some form of support from Turkey for the terror group. One organization that has been reported to have had direct contact with Hamas is the Humanitarian Relief Foundation (IHH) charity that planned the flotilla incident of 2010. We are aware that Treasury has expressed concerns about IHH’s terrorism connections in the past.

Any entity or nation that continues to back this U.S. designated Foreign Terrorist Organization and provide it material and financial support should be sanctioned. Therefore, as Members of the Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa and the Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade, we are requesting that Treasury use every tool available to designate all individuals, institutions, entities, charities, front companies, banks, and government officials who clearly violate U.S. laws by assisting Hamas and its proxies. We also request specific public updates on Treasury's discussions with the Qatari government on previously designated, Qatar-based terrorist financiers that the Qataris have yet to act upon.

Thank you for your immediate attention in this matter.

Sincerely,

ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN
Chairman
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

TED DEUTCH
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on the Middle East and North Africa

TED POE
Chairman
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

BRAD SHERMAN
Ranking Member
Subcommittee on Terrorism, Nonproliferation, and Trade

STEVE CHABOT
Member of Congress

JOSEPH P. KENNEDY III
Member of Congress

RON DESANTIS
Member of Congress

GRACE MENG
Member of Congress

RANDY K. WEBER
Member of Congress

BRIAN HIGGINS
Member of Congress

SCOTT PERRY
Member of Congress

LOIS FRANKEL
Member of Congress

PAUL COOK
Member of Congress

ALAN S. LOWENTHAL
Member of Congress

JOE WILSON
Member of Congress

JUAN VARGAS
Member of Congress

TOM COTTON
Member of Congress

BRADLEY S. SCHNEIDER
Member of Congress

TED S. YOHO
Member of Congress

ALAN GRAYSON
Member of Congress

DOUG COLLINS
Member of Congress

DAVID N. CICILLINE
Member of Congress

CURT CLAWSON
Member of Congress

MARK MEADOWS
Member of Congress

CC: The Honorable Wendy R. Sherman
Under Secretary of State for Political Affairs
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, N.W.
Washington, DC 20520