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May 21, 2020

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel

His Excellency Benjamin Gantz
Alternate Prime Minister of Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu and Alternate Prime Minister Gantz:

I write to convey my belief that unilaterally annexing territory in the West Bank would undermine stability in the region, threaten the viability of Israel's treaties with Jordan and Egypt, and do lasting damage to any possibility of a two-state solution.

I have long been a staunch supporter of Israel and, during my time in Congress, have sought to deepen the close bonds between our two nations, especially with respect to security cooperation and assistance. As the Ranking Member of the Senate Armed Services Committee, I have consistently supported efforts to fully fund U.S.-Israel cooperative missile defense programs, protect Israel's qualitative military edge, and ensure that our defense policies and operations in the Middle East contribute to the security of Israel and stability in the broader region. Furthermore, I have opposed unilateral annexation as a violation of international law as it has occurred in other places around the world, such as in Crimea.

I am greatly concerned that a unilateral annexation of territory would have profound repercussions. It would isolate Israel from critical relationships in the region and around the world. It could seriously hinder the close cooperation among the United States, Israel, Egypt, and Jordan that is so critical to resolving issues related to our mutual security. Indeed, many regional and global leaders and former Israeli security officials have already expressed deep apprehension regarding Israel's reported intentions. As King Abdullah has stated, this move would "have a major impact on the Israel-Jordanian relationship and also on the Egyptian-Israeli relationship, because we are the only two Arab countries that have peace with Israel." Surely, a deterioration of that peace is not in the interest of Israel or of the United States.

Likewise, such an annexation would erode the prospects of a two-state solution. The Palestinians, like all people, have a right to self-determination and must have a voice in their future. A two-state solution, which I have long supported, with Israel secure and at peace with a viable Palestinian state, remains the best chance to achieve lasting security and prosperity for Israelis, Palestinians, and the region. The terms of any such agreement must be made through direct negotiations between the two parties. Unilateral action, by either party, that threatens the prospect of a two-state solution, is unwise and short-sighted.

Like all of my colleagues, I value the longstanding friendship between our two nations and the mutual commitment to democracy, security, and peace. In that spirit, I appreciate your careful consideration of this important issue.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Jack Reed". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Jack" and last name "Reed" clearly distinguishable.

Jack Reed
United States Senator