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CONGRESS OF THE UNITED STATES
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515
August 7, 2012

The Honorable Hillary Rodham Clinton
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C St., NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Clinton,

I am writing about the security aid restrictions contained in the Foreign Assistance Act, commonly referred to as the "Leahy Amendment," and the Department's consideration of allegations of gross human rights abuses in Israel in making aid decisions.

As you know, the Leahy Amendment prohibits the provision of International Military Education and Training (IMET) and Foreign Military Funding (FMF) assistance to countries whose security forces commit a "gross violation of human rights." The threshold for determining whether such violations have been committed is simply that the Secretary has "credible information" to that effect.

Several of my constituents have called my attention to reports by a variety of non-governmental organizations (NGOs), including several in Israel, alleging incidents that they believe meet such a threshold: Amnesty International, B'Tselem, the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA), and the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions (ICAHN). Each of these organizations has alleged incidents that they believe constitute human rights abuse, including (but not limited to) illegal use of firearms, unlawful detention, unlawful displacement, and unlawful demolition of housing structures. It is not clear from the Department of State's Country Report on Human Rights Practices for 2011, however, which portions of these particular reports were considered, and the Department seems to have determined that most of the allegations are unsubstantiated.

I would like to better understand the Department's consideration of alleged human rights violations in preparing the annual Country Report and in fulfilling the requirements of the Leahy Amendment with respect to Israel and the occupied territories. My specific questions are as follows:

- 1) I am aware that the Country Report for 2011 cites reports by several NGOs, including, among others, B'Tselem, Amnesty International, and UNOCHA, that allege human rights violations. Did the Department find that these reports did not constitute credible information of gross human rights abuses by Israeli security forces?

- 2) In the case of the government-led destruction of homes in the West Bank – which is well-documented and not in dispute – does the Department consider such action to constitute a gross violation of human rights?
- 3) Has the Department ever suspended or threatened to suspend aid to Israel under the auspices of the Leahy Amendment? If so, when, and how much aid was affected?
- 4) Has the Department ever continued aid despite credible information of gross violations of human rights because of the statutory exception, which allows aid to continue if the Secretary and the relevant congressional committees determine that the country in question is bringing the offenders to justice?

Thank you for your attention to this matter. If you or your staff has any additional questions, please contact Jackson Tufts of my staff at (202) 225-1784.

Sincerely,



DAVID PRICE
Member of Congress