

Congress of the United States

Washington, D.C. 20515

June 23, 2017

The Honorable Rex Tillerson
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

As the United States works to obtain a permanent peace agreement to enable Israelis and Palestinians to live in mutual peace and economic security, we believe it is critical that the United States do whatever we can to promote diplomatic and non-violent approaches to resolution of the conflict. For that reason, we urge you to work to ensure that Issa Amro--a Palestinian activist and avowed practitioner of non-violence--receives full due process and fair treatment in the face of pending criminal charges against him by the Israeli government.

Issa Amro is a community leader and the founder of Youth Against Settlements, an advocacy group that provides support for Palestinian young people and promotes non-violent protest in his community. He has acted in peaceful protest, and has prevented at least one violent attack by persuading an 18-year old to put down the weapon she had intended to use to stab an Israeli.^[1] Mr. Amro has been outspoken in opposing settlement activity, but he has forsworn violence and chosen to act through the types of non-violent marches and tactics he learned about while studying Gandhi and the American civil rights movement. If he is convicted of a kitchen-sink collection of charges in military court, including "insulting a soldier" and "participating in a march without a permit," Amnesty International has said that it will treat him as a "prisoner of conscience."

Many of our constituents strongly supportive of both Israel security and Mideast peace have contacted us to express deep concern that Mr. Amro is facing 18 charges in military court because of his nonviolent protest activities (with some charges going back as far as 7 years ago). They fear that he will be unable to receive a fair trial in military court, where almost everyone is convicted. In fact, the extraordinary circumstances surrounding Mr. Amro's trial already prompted a representative of the U.S. Embassy--as well as representatives from Germany, the United Kingdom, Spain and other governments--to attend his court hearing as observers.

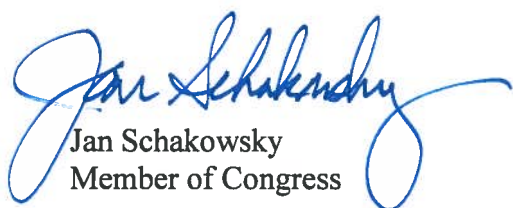
Israel clearly has every reason and every right to take steps to protect the safety and security of citizens. We believe that it is in the interest of both Israelis and Palestinians to protect the rights of peaceful protest as an alternative to the brutal violence that still besets the region. The perception that those who advocate non-violent political methods face unfair treatment and severe prison sentences could strengthen the hand of those who advocate violence

^[1] NPR, "In Hebron a City Hit Hard by Violence A Palestinian Preaches Non-Violence," January 10, 2016.

and terror as political tools. This is a result that all people seeking peace should work to avoid. We strongly encourage you to urge Israeli authorities to prosecute and punish all violent conduct that occurs within its jurisdiction but to guarantee due process and respect the rights of Palestinians to engage in nonviolent human rights advocacy.

As champions of individual rights and fair process, as well as strong supporters of Israeli security and Mideast peace, we appreciate your thoughtful consideration of this request, and we look forward to working with you on our common goal of achieving a lasting peace in the region.

Sincerely,



Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress



Jamie Raskin
Member of Congress