June 29, 2017

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

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

I write to raise concerns regarding the treatment of Mr. Issa Amro, who is reported to be a human rights activist facing charges in Israel related to peaceful civil disobedience and protest. I request that you ask Israeli authorities to review and reconsider the charges against Mr. Amro.

I understand that Mr. Amro is a community leader, committed to nonviolence, and peacefully opposed to Israeli settlements. He also apparently founded an advocacy organization to counsel Palestinian youth on nonviolent means to oppose the settlement expansion which President Trump and the State Department have similarly recognized as unhelpful for the peace process during Prime Minister Netanyahu’s March 2017 visit to the United States.

It has been reported that Mr. Amro was arrested and is facing numerous charges for alleged conduct that appears consistent with nonviolent civil disobedience. Additionally, the veracity of some of these charges have been questioned and other charges do not appear to be criminal offenses that are internationally recognizable. If these reports are correct, the charges Mr. Amro faces could be partially or wholly without merit and Mr. Amro may be unfairly targeted due to his legitimate and peaceful work in defense of human rights.

I am a strong supporter of Israel and fully support its right and duty to protect itself and its people. I also believe that Israel’s long-term security and peace in the region require hopeful paths forward for both Israelis and Palestinians. However, if a government cracks down on peaceful political activism, including protest and civil disobedience, then it runs the risk of increasing violence and seeing more people turn to terrorism. In a region that already faces serious challenges, I hope you would agree that we should encourage governments—including our very close friend and ally, Israel—to permit peaceful, political organization and demonstrations.
While I do not have first-hand or complete knowledge of the underlying allegations against Mr. Amro, I believe it would be constructive for you to urge the Government of Israel to review and reconsider the charges against Mr. Amro. Encouraging Israel to do so may prevent harm to future peaceful solutions while upholding human rights and individual freedom.

Thank you for your consideration of this matter.

Sincerely,

[Signature]

Adam Smith
Member of Congress