

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

April 7, 2014

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

In light of the U.S. Department of State's plan to raise \$4 billion in private investment to boost the Palestinian economy and improve the prospect of a sustainable peace between Israel and the Palestinians, we respectfully ask you to urge Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas to end any punitive measures against investors in the West Bank who are critical of his government.

According to recent news reports in the Palestinian and Israeli press, the Palestinian Authority is thwarting the business operations of a major West Bank investor who criticized President Abbas. The Palestinian news station Wattan TV broadcasted footage of Palestinian Authority security forces arresting a prominent Palestinian businessman after he publicly called on President Abbas to resign. After the investor was detained for eight hours, the Palestinian presidential bureau allegedly ordered the Palestinian Land Authority to effectively bring an end to his business.

Retaliation against investors in the West Bank who criticize government officials falls short of the Palestinian Authority's own standards of free expression, as stated in Article 19 of the Palestinian Basic Law: "Every person shall have the right to express his opinion." In addition, punitive measures threaten to degrade the Palestinian Authority's generally positive record of protecting civil liberties, and stand to undermine efforts by the United States and others to encourage billions of dollars of private investment in the Palestinian Territories to provide a sound economic foundation for a two-state solution.

We respectfully request that you raise this matter with President Abbas. Thank you for everything your team is doing to create economic opportunity in the West Bank and improve the prospect of peace between Israel and the Palestinians.

Sincerely,


Keith Ellison
Member of Congress


Barbara Lee
Member of Congress


James P. Moran
Member of Congress