

Open Letter to Southern California Democratic Representatives:
**Endorse the May 22, 2018 Congressional Letter to Netanyahu
Opposing Demolitions of West Bank Communities**

By LA Jews for Peace; signed by members Maria Castro, Jane Demian, Eric Gordon, Yossi Khen, Victor Kozaski, Lillian Laskin, Judy Levitt, Tony Litwinko, Ruth Persky, Dick Platkin, Uri Talil, Jeff Warner, July 20, 2018

Democrats distinguish themselves from Republicans by their dedication to human rights. Human rights are the essence of the American experience as enunciated in the United States Declaration of Independence which says, “*We hold these truths to be self-evident, that all men are created equal, that they are endowed by their Creator with certain unalienable Rights, that among these are Life, Liberty and the pursuit of Happiness.*” These words declare that all men are created equal which means that all men (and women) have rights. The fight for Human rights is dedicated to preserving the rights of men and women, regardless of their political, religious, ethnic, and national identity.

In defense of human rights, 76 of your Democratic colleagues (twenty from California) signed a May 22, 2018 letter to Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu urging him not to allow the Israeli government “to demolish the Palestinian village of Susiya and other similarly situated Palestinian communities in the West Bank.” The letter is at: <https://schakowsky.house.gov/uploads/Susya%20Letter%20Signed.pdf>.

We urge you to endorse the above described letter for the following reasons.

The letter was circulated by Representatives Jan Schakowsky (D-IL) and John Yarmuth (D-KY) in the spirit of their strong support of “the U.S.-Israel special relationship and a two-state solution to the Israel-Palestinian conflict” and their deep conviction to human rights.

The Schakowsky–Yarmouth letter follows two similar letters defending Susiya from demolition. One dated Nov. 29, 2017 was organized by Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-CA) and Bernard Sanders (I-VT) and cosigned by eight of their Democratic colleagues (https://www.feinstein.senate.gov/public/_cache/files/2/8/28fd589c-132e-4358-a085-86903290ca45/7B007E4C979E9D7AE0B3754C994DA8F9.2017.11.29-netanyahu-letter.pdf). The other dated Jan. 9, 2018 was organized and signed by 300 rabbis ([https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.jstreet.org/images/Rabbinic Letter on Susya to PM Netanyahu.pdf](https://s3.amazonaws.com/s3.jstreet.org/images/Rabbinic+Letter+on+Susya+to+PM+Netanyahu.pdf)).

Susiya sits on private Palestinian land and has existed in the South Hebron Hills of the West Bank since at least the 1830s. Today approximately 45 families including 85 children, live in Susiya and survive through subsistence farming and shepherding.

The destruction and displacement of Susiya and other communities pose a serious threat to the human rights of Palestinians, to the prospects for a two-state solution and to Israel’s future as a Jewish and democratic state. The letter says:

“The forcible eviction of Palestinian communities and the expansion of settlements in areas of the West Bank, which would become part of a future Palestinian state, abandon our two countries’ shared values of justice and respect for human rights. These actions unilaterally change facts on the ground and jeopardize the prospects of a two-state solution. This endangers Israel’s future as a Jewish democracy and prohibitively impacts Palestinian’s national aspirations.”

The letter suggests that rather than “forcibly evicting Palestinian communities,” the Israeli government should “fairly re-evaluate” their building rights.

The Schakowsky–Yarmouth letter was written almost two months ago, but it is relevant today as Israel’s threat to demolish Khan al-Ahmar, a different Palestinians village, has been temporarily stopped by the Israeli Supreme Court . It is clear that demolition of Palestinian villages, one-by-one, is part of Israel’s plan to Judaize Palestinian regions in the West Bank and make any resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict impossible.