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October 7, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
1600 Pennsylvania Ave
Washington, D.C. 20500

The Honorable Kamala Harris
Vice President of the United States
1 Observatory Circle NW
Washington, D.C. 20392

Dear President Biden and Vice President Harris,

Today marks one year since Hamas brutally invaded Israel, murdering upwards of 1,200 individuals, including 40 American citizens,¹ taking 251 hostages,² and launching thousands of rockets toward Israel, spreading chaos across the Middle East. Three hundred sixty-five days later, and the war, started by Iranian proxies, has only expanded, with Israel facing threats on all sides.³

Your administration's response to this crisis in the Middle East – sparked in part by your haphazard withdrawal from Afghanistan – has been nothing short of catastrophic, costing American lives, demoralizing our allies, and emboldening our adversaries.

As you know, your 2022 National Security Strategy established five basic goals⁴ to guide your administration's approach to the Middle East. As Americans prepare to judge the value of both of your leadership capabilities, let us review the true scale of the Biden-Harris administration's failure in the Middle East—based on objectives for the region that *you* defined.

“First, the United States will support and strengthen partnerships with countries that subscribe to the rules-based international order, and we will make sure those countries can defend themselves against foreign threats.”

¹ <https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/hamas-hostages-israel-gaza-41432124>

² <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67053011>

³ <https://www.newsweek.com/israels-war-iran-seven-fronts-1920862>

⁴ <https://www.whitehouse.gov/wp-content/uploads/2022/10/Biden-Harris-Administrations-National-Security-Strategy-10.2022.pdf>

Reality: Despite your promise for “ironclad” support for Israel, you have withheld critical ammunition⁵ that Israel needs to defeat Iran and its proxies and free our U.S. hostages. After a year of increasing attacks against Israel, the hostage negotiations are failing, with reporting that a deal will not happen during the remainder of your administration. An American citizen was just murdered by Hamas and the few surviving American hostages are in more danger day by day. Meanwhile, you have sharply rebuked Israeli leaders, accusing them of not doing enough to free the release of the hostages⁶ when your own Secretary of State said that Israel has made “extraordinarily generous” concessions to reach a hostage deal.⁷ Your administration also paused arms sales to the UAE and Saudi Arabia, undermining our partners’ ability to defend themselves against escalating threats by Iran.⁸ All of this, paired with your administration’s disastrous withdrawal from Afghanistan, which Vice President Kamala Harris recently reiterated her full support of, shook the faith of our Middle Eastern allies to its core.

“Second, the United States will not allow foreign or regional powers to jeopardize freedom of navigation through the Middle East’s waterways, including the Strait of Hormuz and the Bab al Mandab, nor tolerate efforts by any country to dominate another—or the region—through military buildups, incursions, or threats.”

Reality: Within one month of your inauguration, you revoked President Trump’s designation of the Houthis as a Foreign Terrorist Organization⁹. Since October 7, 2023, Iran-backed Houthis have launched over 190 attacks¹⁰ on more than 80 commercial¹¹ and naval ships in the Red Sea. Iran has also menaced the Strait of Hormuz and other Middle Eastern waterways, harassing, attacking, or seizing military and commercial ships on more than two dozen occasions since your inauguration.¹²

“Third, even as the United States works to deter threats to regional stability, we will work to reduce tensions, de-escalate, and end conflicts wherever possible through diplomacy.”

Reality. You scrapped the Trump-era maximum pressure campaign against Iran, refusing to enforce Congressionally mandated oil sanctions. As a result, Iran’s illegal oil revenue has soared,

⁵ <https://abcnews.go.com/Politics/biden-administration-pauses-ammunition-shipments-israel-us-officials/story?id=109993270>

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/biden-says-netanyahu-not-doing-enough-secure-hostage-deal-2024-09-02/>

⁷ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/blincken-hopes-hamas-takes-israels-extraordinarily-generous-truce-offer/>

⁸ <https://www.cnn.com/2021/01/27/politics/us-pauses-saudi-uae-arms-sales/index.html>

⁹ <https://apnews.com/article/joe-biden-donald-trump-civil-wars-yemen-d17b50e3995827838a19fb8bd09e9f64>

¹⁰ <https://www.defense.gov/News/Transcripts/Transcript/Article/3809715/deputy-pentagon-press-secretary-sabrina-singh-holds-an-off-camera-on-the-record/>

¹¹ <https://iranprimer.usip.org/blog/2024/jul/18/houthi-explainer-conflict-red-sea>

¹² <https://storymaps.arcgis.com/stories/756ca769315d4b879ca7fdd6bd4a82be>

allowing Tehran to funnel more money to its terrorist proxies. Under President Trump and the strong enforcement measures to cut off Iran's oil revenues, Iran saw the lowest revenues in 2020. This in turn meant less money for the regime to supply to its terror proxies. However, under the Biden-Harris administration, Iran has seen more than a 580% increase in oil revenues since 2020.¹³

Prior to April, Iran had never directly attacked Israel, but under your watch, Tehran has directly attacked Israel twice within four months. April marked the first-ever direct attack by Iran¹⁴ where over 300 missiles were launched towards Israel. Then last week, Iran shot nearly 200 ballistic missiles at Israel,¹⁵ attempting to overwhelm their defenses to strike at civilian sites and cities.

You have also allowed Iranian proxies to launch more than 176 attacks on U.S. servicemembers in the region,¹⁶ with no recourse. In June, President Biden declared that he was “the only president this century” that didn’t have any troops “dying anywhere in the world.”¹⁷ Vice President Harris claimed that there is “not one member of the United States military who is on active duty in a combat zone, in any war zone around the world, the first time this century.”¹⁸ By making such egregious lies, your administration ignores thousands of our brave servicemen and women who are currently forward deployed in the Middle East while also memory-holing the death of 13 servicemembers during the Afghanistan withdrawal. You also conveniently forgot the Iran-backed strike on Tower 22 earlier this year that killed three U.S. soldiers and injured 40 others.¹⁹

“Fourth, the United States will promote regional integration by building political, economic, and security connections between and among U.S. partners, including through integrated air and maritime defense structures, while respecting each country’s sovereignty and independent choices.”

Reality. You could have built on the Trump administration’s Abraham Accords to deepen regional integration among U.S. partners. Instead, you ignored our allies and partners and courted Tehran, seeking to rekindle the Iran Nuclear Deal. Tehran has responded to your détente push by defying the International Atomic Energy Agency, growing its enriched uranium

¹³ <https://www.unitedagainstnucleariran.com/blog/analysis-of-iranian-oil-sales-under-president-trump-vs-president-biden>

¹⁴ <https://www.csis.org/analysis/assessing-israels-strike-iran>

¹⁵ <https://www.nbcnews.com/news/world/iran-launched-ballistic-missile-attack-israel-rcna173434>

¹⁶ <https://www.fdd.org/iranattacksusforces/>

¹⁷ <https://www.foxnews.com/politics/biden-makes-stunning-omission-while-claiming-no-troops-died-anywhere-in-world>

¹⁸ <https://www.usatoday.com/story/news/politics/elections/2024/09/11/trump-harris-debate-us-troops-combat-zones/75171915007/>

¹⁹ <https://www.defense.gov/News/News-Stories/Article/Article/3659809/3-us-service-members-killed-others-injured-in-jordan-following-drone-attack/>

stockpiles, developing nuclear-capable hypersonic missiles, and shortening its nuclear breakout time to one or two weeks.²⁰

Under the Trump administration, five nations joined the Accords. Under your leadership, no new countries joined the historic agreement. In fact, for more than a year into the Biden-Harris administration, you failed to mention or do hardly any work to promote the Accords.²¹ This failure has isolated and stunned our partners as the United States, under your leadership, so easily left them behind after they made a bold decision to normalize relations with Israel.²²

Had it not been for Congress pushing your administration into designating a Special Envoy for the Abraham Accords,²³ or ensuring we had increased military integration in the Middle East, the situation in the region could be far worse.²⁴ Only because your administration was pressured to change course have we not lost a single Arab Accords signatory partner through the war in Israel. In fact, through my bipartisan work in Congress, our Accords partners jointly countered the barrage of missiles sent by Iran this year.

“Fifth, the United States will always promote human rights and the values enshrined in the UN Charter.”

Reality. In August, we marked the third anniversary of your disastrous and rushed withdrawal from Afghanistan where you abandoned Americans and our allies. Women and girls who were just starting to enjoy their freedoms are again faced with oppression and subjugation by the ruthless Taliban regime.²⁵

During the 2022-2023 Mahsa Amini protests, tens of thousands of Iranians marched against the Ayatollah’s regime. The Biden-Harris White House failed to meaningfully support the Iranian people, as Tehran murdered hundreds of its own citizens.

You reversed the Trump administration’s funding ban on the U.N. Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) despite widely documented evidence that human rights-abusing Hamas had infiltrated the U.N. agency. Then, on October 7, 2023, over a dozen UNRWA employees supported Hamas’s invasion of Israel, taking part in horrific acts of human rights violations,²⁶ including the

²⁰ <https://www.fdd.org/analysis/2024/07/19/iran-one-or-two-weeks-away-from-producing-deadly-nuclear-fissile-material-blinken-warns/>

²¹ <https://foreignpolicy.com/2022/01/19/biden-israel-arab-peace-abraham-accords/>

²² <https://www.gisreportsonline.com/r/abraham-accords-biden/>

²³ <https://www.ajc.org/news/ajc-applauds-passage-of-legislation-to-strengthen-abraham-accords-curb-irans-influence>

²⁴ <https://www.ernst.senate.gov/news/press-releases/ernst-equips-abraham-accords-nations-with-access-to-cutting-edge-technology>

²⁵ <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2023/03/afghanistan-un-experts-say-20-years-progress-women-and-girls-rights-erased>

²⁶ <https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-sent-unrwa-list-of-100-employees-it-says-are-hamas-pij-terrorists-reports/>

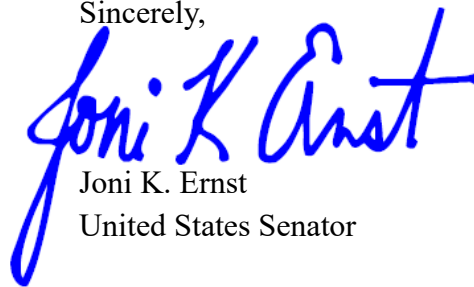
use of rape as a weapon of war. Just last week it was exposed that a top Hamas leader in Lebanon was also a teacher within UNRWA,²⁷ revealing the deep-rooted rot of the entire organization that your administration had chosen to overlook.

As a top U.N. Security Council member, the United States has failed to lead any U.N. resolution that condemns Hamas for the barbaric attacks on October 7, 2023, and the mass murder, torture and kidnapping of men, women, and children, and the sadistic use of rape by Hamas fighters.²⁸

Mr. President and Madam Vice President, you have succeeded in none of the five objectives you set out for the Middle East. If this were a graded test, you would receive an F.

Despite the fantastical claims by your Secretary of State last week,²⁹ your administration's strategy has put the United States in a much *weaker* geopolitical position today than it was four years ago. The American people, our servicemembers, and our allies and partners deserve better.

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator

²⁷ https://www.timesofisrael.com/liveblog_entry/unrwa-confirms-hamas-leader-in-lebanon-was-its-employee/

²⁸ <https://www.ajc.org/news/one-year-later-why-cant-the-un-lay-blame-for-october-7-where-it-belongs>

²⁹ <https://www.foreignaffairs.com/united-states/antony-blinken-americas-strategy-renewal-leadership-new-world>