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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
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Dear Friend,

Thank you for reaching out to my office about the ongoing crisis in Israel, Gaza, and beyond. The most important aspect of my job is understanding the concerns of the Michiganders I was elected to represent. This wouldn't be possible without hearing from folks like you, so I sincerely appreciate you getting in touch.

As you know, this issue is one of the most complex, longstanding, and painful of international conflicts. The violence in the Middle East reverberates profoundly in Michigan, where large Muslim, Arab, and Jewish populations make their home and maintain personal relationships and connections. As a Jewish woman, and as someone who has spent years living in the region, the scenes of violence are gut-wrenching, and I mourn the significant loss of life in this conflict.

So first, I will start with the facts. On October 7, 2023, Hamas terrorists launched an unprecedented attack on Israel – firing a barrage of rockets, breaking through the barrier that separates Israel and Gaza, and committing unspeakable acts, including the massacre of women, children, and elderly, and the kidnapping of more than 200 people (including Americans) with more than 100 still held hostage in Gaza today. The stories, photos, and videos that have come out since have shaken Israel, and many Michiganders, to their core. American fatalities stand at more than thirty.

In the months since, we have also seen an unprecedented Israeli air strike campaign and ground operation in Gaza, killing tens of thousands of civilians. The humanitarian crisis – particularly access to food, water, medical supplies, and electricity – has become dire. Gaza is one of the poorest and most crowded places on earth. As a former national security professional who worked for many years in the Middle East, I have seen up close and personal how civilians pay the price of war. To be clear, there is no equivalency between Israel and Hamas terrorists. But, Hamas' heinous acts do not eliminate Israel's responsibility to protect civilians. That is why I have repeatedly called for a negotiated ceasefire to facilitate the safe return of hostages, pause violence, and allow additional humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza. From December through this month, I have both publicly and privately urged the President to facilitate a durable, negotiated

ceasefire deal. In four public letters, private meetings with dozens of U.S. and Israeli officials, and five briefings and public hearings, I raised this issue.

On April 20, the House of Representatives passed a bipartisan foreign aid package that provided aid for Israel, Ukraine, and the Indo-Pacific region. While I voted in favor of these packages, I understand the concern that many Americans feel about military aid to Israel. To be clear, a third of the assistance was defensive in nature, like the Iron Dome missile defense system, and cannot be used in offensive operations. The bill also included \$9 billion in humanitarian assistance for civilians in Gaza. After this vote, I reiterated the need for a ceasefire – to allow for the return of hostages and to allow desperately needed aid into Gaza. I also made clear that if Israel does not address the humanitarian crisis, allow humanitarian aid to flow consistently, and make clear their plan to do a better job at limiting civilian harm in any future operations, I believe it would then be time to consider restrictions on our offensive military assistance.

Unfortunately, I remain deeply concerned about the expansion of conflict in the region, particularly from Iran and Iranian-backed groups, and the potential flare ups that can happen anytime. On April 13, Iran launched its first-ever, state-on-state attack against Israel using hundreds of ballistic missiles, cruise missiles, and drones in response to the killing of multiple senior Islamic Revolutionary Guard Corps leaders in Syria by Israel. The United States, United Kingdom, Jordan, and France contributed to the defense of Israel, stopping most of the incoming fire. We have also seen Iranian-backed Hizballah fire missiles and rockets from Lebanon into northern Israel, Iranian-backed Houthis in Yemen launch missiles and drones toward U.S. and other countries' warships and commercial ships in the Red Sea, and Iranian-backed groups in Syria and Iraq launch attacks against U.S. and partner forces who are in the region to support the fight against ISIS. We continue to see growing escalation in the region, which I am concerned is nearing a tipping point that could involve U.S. forces. The best option before us is negotiated peace and for Israel and Hamas to accept the ceasefire deal that President Biden has put forward.

I also heard directly from Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu when he addressed Congress on July 24th, and that same day I was able to meet with families of American hostages still held captive by Hamas. I had hoped to hear concrete plans from PM Netanyahu to bring the hostages home, getting aid into Gaza, and securing a ceasefire. He spoke in broad generalities but provided little detail on his plans to transition to a new phase for the "day after." The people of Israel, the American people who have supported Israel for decades, and the Palestinian people in Gaza, deserve those answers. Now is the time for both sides to accept the deal so we can work toward the only real, long-term path toward peace: a two-state solution.

Lastly, here at home, I remain concerned about the increase in antisemitic, Islamophobic, and anti-Arab violence around the country. We must be prepared to protect the security of American citizens and the security of their religious institutions, and community centers. I have spoken with many Jewish-, Muslim-, and Arab-American leaders in our district and across the state to extend my support for their communities, to recognize the pain and dehumanization they feel, and advise them to take additional steps in ensuring their security. I've also spoken directly with

the White House, Department of Homeland Security, and FBI to get a better understanding of what they're seeing nationally and their preparation for an increase in threats at home. It is important, especially in Michigan where we have such big Middle Eastern and Jewish populations, that we continue to respond to hate in any form, no matter who says it or what the person's political persuasion is. The bottom line is when there is hatred and bias, or violent language, we must condemn it in all forms and from all players.

Once again, sincere thanks for reaching out. I believe that engaging your elected officials is critically important to our democracy and allows me to better represent you, so thank you for taking the time to get in touch.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Elissa Slotkin". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "E" and a long, sweeping tail.

Elissa Slotkin
Member of Congress