November 18, 2019

His Excellency Mr. Antonio Guterres
Secretary General
United Nations
New York, NY 10017

Dear Mr. Secretary General:

As Republicans and Democrats, we are united in our concern about the continuing, serious violations of United Nations Security Council Resolution 1701 and the resulting threat our ally Israel faces on its northern border.

As you know, UNSCR 1701 called upon the Lebanese Government to extend its sovereignty over all of Lebanon and to disarm “all armed groups in Lebanon, so that...there will be no weapons or authority in Lebanon other than that of the Lebanese State.” The resolution also increased the size and mandate of the United Nations Interim Force in Lebanon (UNIFIL) to help Lebanon secure its border, prevent the unauthorized importation of arms and promote a zone north of the Israel-Lebanon border, “…free of any armed personnel, assets and weapons other than those of the Government of Lebanon and of UNIFIL…”

After 13 years, Lebanon’s attempts to implement this resolution have been unsuccessful. Instead, under the nose of UNIFIL and the international community, Hezbollah has built a murderous capability aimed at Israel’s civilian population. In the thirteen years since the unanimous passage of the Security Council resolution, Hezbollah, with the assistance of Iran, the world’s leading state sponsor of terrorism, has amassed a deadly arsenal of about 150,000 rockets and missiles aimed at Israel. Iran is currently exacerbating this threat by transferring precision guided munitions to Hezbollah and building munitions factories in Lebanon for the benefit of the internationally-recognized terrorist organization. Hezbollah’s leader, Hassan Nasrallah, regularly threatens the people of Israel and, as recently as last month, Hezbollah launched a missile attack on northern Israel.

Hezbollah has also spent tens of millions of dollars to develop an underground attack capability. Last year, Israel exposed six terror tunnels that crossed from southern Lebanon into Israel. Hezbollah built these tunnels to enable armed Hezbollah terrorists to enter Israeli towns to kidnap and kill civilians.

The United Nations Security Council spoke out clearly and unanimously by passing UNSCR 1701. In doing so, the international community committed itself to Lebanese sovereignty and Israeli security. Hezbollah’s military build-up threatens both. We believe Beirut must address the Hezbollah challenge on an urgent basis. Continued failure to do so weakens Lebanon’s
relationship with the international community and increases the threats to the Lebanese People and Israel’s security.

We also urge you, Mr. Secretary, to assist Lebanon’s Prime Minister and President to finally reclaim Lebanese sovereignty and implement all the terms of UNSCR 1701, including allowing UNIFIL to fulfill its mandate in southern Lebanon. At the same time, we request that you insist that UNIFIL fully implement its mandate despite pressure from Hezbollah. UNIFIL should accurately report on Hezbollah violations of UNSCR 1701 and work with the Government of Lebanon to remove Hezbollah’s weapons from the south.

It should be evident to all that Israel faces a growing threat from Hezbollah’s missile arsenal. No country can tolerate a terrorist organization on its border acquiring the capability to endanger its population. Israel has the right to defend itself and will have the full bipartisan support of the United States if it must act to protect its citizens.

Furthermore, in light of recent events, we recognize major steps will have to be taken by Lebanon’s political leadership to address deep popular concerns about economic instability, governance, and corruption. We therefore urge the UN to continue efforts to ensure the government of Lebanon remains independent and fully sovereign.

We urge you, Mr. Secretary, to lead an international effort to limit Hezbollah’s capabilities and to avoid the devastating but avoidable outcome of which you have previously warned. We fear significant civilian costs in Lebanon if Israel must act to defend its citizens because Hezbollah has positioned its massive arsenal in civilian areas – turning much of Lebanon’s population into human shields. Hezbollah will bear the responsibility for that, as will the Government of Lebanon and the international community.

We look forward to the opportunity to discuss this and other issues with you in the near future.

Sincerely,

Elaine G. Luria  
Member of Congress

Haley Stevens  
Member of Congress

Lee Zeldin  
Member of Congress

Michael Waltz  
Member of Congress
Steny Hoyer
Majority Leader

Steve Scalise
Minority Whip

Eliot L. Engel
Member of Congress

Michael T. McCaul
Member of Congress

Ralph Abraham, M.D.
Member of Congress

Alma Adams
Member of Congress

Robert B. Aderholt
Member of Congress

Colin Allred
Member of Congress

Kelly Armstrong
Member of Congress

Cindy Axne
Member of Congress

Brian Babin, D.D.S.
Member of Congress

Don Bacon
Member of Congress

James R. Baird
Member of Congress

Troy Balderson
Member of Congress

Jim Banks
Member of Congress

Andy Barr
Member of Congress
Joyce Beatty  
Member of Congress

Jack Bergman  
Member of Congress

Gus M. Bilirakis  
Member of Congress

Sanford D. Bishop, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Mike Bost  
Member of Congress

Anthony Brindisi  
Member of Congress

Vern Buchanan  
Member of Congress

Ted Budd  
Member of Congress

Ami Bera  
Member of Congress

Andy Biggs  
Member of Congress

Rob Bishop  
Member of Congress

Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress

Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress

Anthony G. Brown  
Member of Congress

Ken Buck  
Member of Congress

Tim Burchett  
Member of Congress
Bradley Byrne  
Member of Congress

Ken Calvert  
Member of Congress

Tony Cárdenas  
Member of Congress

Earl L. "Buddy" Carter  
Member of Congress

Liz Cheney  
Member of Congress

David N. Cicilline  
Member of Congress

Gilbert R. Cisneros, Jr.  
Member of Congress

Emanuel Cleaver, II  
Member of Congress

Ben Cline  
Member of Congress

Tom Cole  
Member of Congress

Doug Collins  
Member of Congress

K. Michael Conaway  
Member of Congress

Jim Cooper  
Member of Congress

Jim Costa  
Member of Congress

TJ Cox  
Member of Congress

Angie Craig  
Member of Congress
Veronica Escobar
Member of Congress

Anna G. Eshoo
Member of Congress

Adriano Espaillat
Member of Congress

Ron Estes
Member of Congress

A. Drew Ferguson, IV
Member of Congress

Brian Fitzpatrick
Member of Congress

Chuck Fleischmann
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Lois Frankel
Member of Congress

Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress

Mike Gallagher
Member of Congress

Greg Gianforte
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Bob Gibbs
Member of Congress

Jared Golden
Member of Congress
William R. Keating
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Ron Kind
Member of Congress

Steve King
Member of Congress

Raja Krishnamoorthi
Member of Congress

Doug LaMalfa
Member of Congress

James R. Langevin
Member of Congress

Brenda Lawrence
Member of Congress

Joseph P. Kennedy, III
Member of Congress

Andy Kim
Member of Congress

Peter T. King
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Ann Kirkpatrick
Member of Congress

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John B. Larson
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H. Morgan Griffith
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Jim Hagedorn
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Alcee L. Hastings
Member of Congress

Vicente Gonzalez
Member of Congress

Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress

Mark E. Green, M.D.
Member of Congress

Glenn Grothman
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Josh Harder
Member of Congress

Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress
Ben McAdams  
Member of Congress

Lucy McBath  
Member of Congress

Tom McClintock  
Member of Congress

A. Donald McEachin  
Member of Congress

Patrick McHenry  
Member of Congress

David B. McKinley, P.E.  
Member of Congress

Cathy McMorris-Rodgers  
Member of Congress

Mark Meadows  
Member of Congress

Gregory Meeks  
Member of Congress

Grace Meng  
Member of Congress

Paul Mitchell  
Member of Congress

John Moolenaar  
Member of Congress

Joseph D. Morelle  
Member of Congress

Seth Moulton  
Member of Congress

Debbie Mucarsel-Powell  
Member of Congress

Markwayne Mullin  
Member of Congress
Gregory F. Murphy, M.D.  
Member of Congress

Jerrold Nadler  
Member of Congress

Grace F. Napolitano  
Member of Congress

Dan Newhouse  
Member of Congress

Ralph Norman  
Member of Congress

Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

W. Gregory Steube  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

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Scott R. Tipton  
Member of Congress

Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress

David Trone  
Member of Congress

Bryan Steil  
Member of Congress

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Member of Congress

Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress

Van Taylor  
Member of Congress

Mac Thornberry  
Member of Congress

Dina Titus  
Member of Congress

Lori Trahan  
Member of Congress

Michael R. Turner  
Member of Congress
Fred Upton  
Member of Congress

Ann Wagner  
Member of Congress

Greg Walden  
Member of Congress

Jackie Walorski  
Member of Congress

Steve Watkins  
Member of Congress

Randy Weber  
Member of Congress

Roger Williams  
Member of Congress

Steve Womack  
Member of Congress

Jeff Van Drew  
Member of Congress

Tim Walberg  
Member of Congress

Mark Walker  
Member of Congress

Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress

Bruce Westerman  
Member of Congress

Joe Wilson  
Member of Congress

Don Young  
Member of Congress
Juan Vargas
Member of Congress

Joe Neguse
Member of Congress

Judy Hice
Member of Congress

Carol D. Miller
Member of Congress

French Hill
Member of Congress