Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 10, 2017

The President
The White House
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As Members of Congress who care deeply about anti-Semitism at home and abroad, we urge you to maintain and prioritize the appointment of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism at the U.S. State Department's Office of the Special Envoy to Monitor and Combat Anti-Semitism. During previous administrations, this office was crucial in documenting human rights abuses against Jewish communities abroad as well as developing and implementing policies designed to combat anti-Semitism.

The Office of the Special Envoy was created by the Global Anti-Semitism Review Act—through provisions authored by the Bipartisan Taskforce for Combating Anti-Semitism Co-Chair Chris Smith—which passed Congress with broad bipartisan support in 2004. Since its creation, the Special Envoy has reported on troubling incidents impacting Jews worldwide in the annual State Department Human Rights Report, helping to identify concerning attacks, trends, and events impacting Jews worldwide. For instance, the 2015 Human Rights Report detailed the horrific kosher supermarket attack in France, the xenophobic and anti-Semitic Jobbik party in Hungary, and the desecration of Jewish sites—such as cemeteries and memorials—in places like Argentina, Greece, Egypt, and Ukraine. The tracking of international incidents of anti-Semitism is crucial in providing Members of Congress a comprehensive understanding of the problem's scope.

This office has also been responsible for ensuring that American diplomats around the globe are operating under the same definition of anti-Semitism. In the past, the State Department published and promoted a definition of anti-Semitism adapted from the Working Definition of Anti-Semitism of the European Monitoring Center on Racism and Xenophobia: "Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities."

We view U.S. leadership on combating anti-Semitism and promoting human rights as pivotal components of American diplomacy and foreign policy. The Office of the Special Envoy enables the U.S. to show the world its commitment to these ideals, particularly at a time when anti-Semitism is dangerously on the rise. As Members of Congress devoted to the protection of vulnerable minorities, we urge you to support resources for this crucial office and prioritize this presidential appointment. Such actions will help ensure that the U.S. continues to play an indispensable leadership role in promoting global tolerance, pluralism, and human rights.

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Thank you for your attention to these critical issues, and we look forward to your response.

Respectfully,

Eliot L. Engel

Chris Smith

Rita M. Lowey

Ileana Ros-Lehtinen

Ed Deutch

Kay Granger

Suzanne Bonamici

Jim McGovern

Jamie Raskin

Mr. President
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