



For Immediate Release
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Senators to Netanyahu: Stop Israeli Demolition of West Bank Villages

Washington—Senators Dianne Feinstein (D-Calif.) and Bernard Sanders (I-Vt.) joined with eight of their Democratic colleagues today [to call on Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu](#) to stop the demolition of the Palestinian village of Susiya and the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar in the West Bank.

“We have long championed a two-state solution as a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict,” the senators wrote. **“Yet, your government’s efforts to forcibly evict entire Palestinian communities and expand settlements throughout the West Bank not only directly imperil a two-state solution, but we believe also endanger Israel’s future as a Jewish democracy. We urge you to change course so that you do not foreclose the possibility of establishing two states for two peoples.”**

The full text of the [letter](#) follows:

November 29, 2017

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu
Prime Minister of Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu:

We write today to urge your government not to demolish the Palestinian village of Susiya and the Bedouin community of Khan al-Ahmar. The displacement of entire communities would be an irreversible step away from a two-state solution, and we urge your government to abandon its efforts to destroy these villages.

As you know, Susiya sits atop private Palestinian land in “Area C” of the West Bank, and has existed in the South Hebron Hills since at least since the 1830s. Today, approximately 45 families—including 85 children—call Susiya their home and survive through subsistence farming and shepherding.

Khan al-Ahmar is a Bedouin community of 170 people situated east of Jerusalem and adjacent to the settlement of Ma’aleh Adumim. It has a mosque and a local school built of recycled tires and mud, which serves more than 150 children from the surrounding area. Because of the community’s location, demolishing Khan al-Ahmar would make it increasingly difficult to establish a contiguous Palestinian state as part of any future two-state solution.

Earlier this year, we were alarmed by the public comments of Defense Minister Avigdor Liberman, who said that “work was being done to implement plans to evacuate the Palestinian villages of Susiya in the South Hebron Hills and Khan al-Ahmar near Ma’aleh Adumim within a few months.”

Instead of forcibly evicting these communities, we encourage your government to fairly re-evaluate Susiya's professionally-developed master plan and provide the residents of Khan al-Ahmar equal building rights. Your government's threats to demolish these communities are particularly distressing in light of the Israeli Civil Administration's efforts to dramatically expand settlements throughout the West Bank.

According to the Israeli non-government organization Peace Now, in 2017, Israel advanced 88 plans that include 6,742 housing units in 59 separate settlements, a 258 percent increase in the number of housing units proposed in 2016. Further, your government officially approved the construction of the new settlement of Amihai, which is in addition to the 19 settler outposts that have been retroactively legalized since 2011.

We have long championed a two-state solution as a just resolution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Yet, your government's efforts to forcibly evict entire Palestinian communities and expand settlements throughout the West Bank not only directly imperil a two-state solution, but we believe also endanger Israel's future as a Jewish democracy. We urge you to change course so that you do not foreclose the possibility of establishing two states for two peoples.

Sincerely,

Dianne Feinstein
United States Senator

Bernard Sanders
United States Senator

Patrick Leahy
United States Senator

Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator

Tom Carper
United States Senator

Al Franken
United States Senator

Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

Jeff Merkley
United States Senator

Brian Schatz
United States Senator