

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

March 26, 2015

Ambassador Samantha Power
United States Ambassador to the United Nations
United States Mission to the United Nations
799 United Nations Plaza
New York, New York 10017

Dear Ambassador Power,

We write with concern about the passage last week of the one-sided resolution adopted by the United Nations Commission on the Status of Women blaming Israel for “the grave situation of Palestinian women.” We thank you for your vote in opposition to the resolution. We were appalled that this anti-Israel measure was the only resolution that criticized an individual country for its treatment of women adopted by the body. To criticize Israel – and only Israel – for mistreatment of women is shameful and serves as a prominent reminder of the systematic bias that Israel faces at the United Nations. This obsessive anti-Israel focus prevents the United Nations from making progress on vitally important human rights issues while providing immunity for some of the world’s most oppressive regimes.

It is ironic that this resolution came the same week as Israel’s elections, which yielded a record 28 female Members of the Knesset. Israel has been proactively focusing on ways to promote gender equality. The previous Knesset passed laws ensuring maternity allowance for Israel Defense Forces soldiers and created a forum to address the specific needs of women in the Arab and Ultra-Orthodox communities. Israel’s record on women’s rights is worthy of emulation, not condemnation. To frame the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a case of Israel the oppressor and Palestinian women the victim is completely detached from reality.

The unwarranted condemnation of Israel is greatly exacerbated by the Commission’s failure to condemn the horrific situation for women elsewhere in the Middle East. In the 2014 World Economic Forum Global Gender Gap Report, Israel’s neighbors ranked as some of the worst countries in the world in gender equality. Out of 142 countries, Saudi Arabia ranked 130th, Lebanon ranked 135th, Iran ranked 137th, and Syria ranked 139th. Israel ranked 65th, by far the best of any country in the Middle East. Iran continues to allow horrific practices against women. A recent UN report indicated that Iran allows girls as young as nine to be married, and values women’s testimony in court as half that of a man’s. Sixty-six percent of Iranian women have been victims of domestic violence. War in Syria has led to widespread rape of Syrian women by Assad regime soldiers. ISIS has been selling women into sex slavery. As Israeli diplomat Nelly Shiloh said in her official response to the resolution, “Singling out Israel for condemnation, among all the nations of the Middle East – and the nations of the world, is not only unfair. It is

absurd.” It is unconscionable that members of the Commission, with substantial worse gender equality rankings than Israel, would support such a one-sided resolution.

The inability of the UN Commission on the Status of Women to pass a resolution to condemn any of these horrific violations of women’s rights across the Middle East is a disservice to women around the world. The United States must continue to champion and protect the rights of women around the world, and we applaud you for voting against this resolution.

Sincerely,



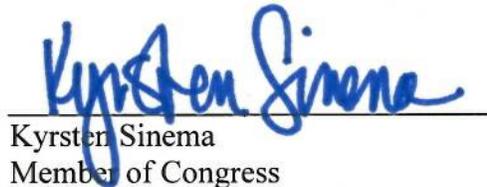
Vicky Hartzler
Member of Congress



Susan Davis
Member of Congress



Jackie Walorski
Member of Congress



Kyrsten Sinema
Member of Congress