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**Congress of the United States**  
**House of Representatives**

January 5, 2009

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The Honorable Barack Obama  
President-Elect  
Obama-Biden Presidential Transition Project  
Washington, DC 20270

Dear President-elect Obama:

It is with great soberness that many around the world have watched recent events unfolding in Gaza. I have been to the Israeli city of Sderot and have walked the streets and spoken with the families living in fear. Rockets have rained down into bedrooms, markets and schools and Israel's patience has understandably run out.

The United States must demonstrate a sincere commitment to engage in the peace process using a culturally comprehensive approach. Such an approach must take into account the political developments, economic realities, social relationships and religious history that is central in the daily lives of the Israeli and Palestinian people.

It has become clear over the last 60 years that long-distance shuttle diplomacy simply will not work in this situation. There needs to be a person on the ground who can both respond to events as they are happening in the short term while working to foster relationships and build trust in the long term. Therefore, I urge you, by the end of January, to appoint a high-level special envoy to the Middle East with an experienced negotiating team as part of a larger permanent U.S. operation based in the city of Jerusalem. The special envoy would serve as the leader of a dedicated group of individuals who would each serve as political, economic, social and religious specialists comprising a culturally comprehensive approach.

A purely political solution does not exist as this is not merely a political dispute. We need look no further than the holy city of Jerusalem to know this is true. Each of the three Abrahamic faiths view sites of tremendous historical and spiritual significance in this one small plot of land. If you are Jewish, you have the Western Wall. If you are Christian, you have the church of the Holy Sepulcher. If you are Muslim, you have the Dome of the Rock.

Throughout the course of your campaign you seized on the idea of change. Previous attempts over the last several decades to broker a Middle East peace have failed. A sustained American presence and commitment with a specific focus could in fact bring about real change in this land so rich in history and spiritual significance. I urge you to do so.

Best wishes.

Sincerely,

Frank R. Wolf  
Member of Congress