



**United States Senate**  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0504  
<http://feinstein.senate.gov>

October 2, 2015

His Excellency Benjamin Netanyahu  
Prime Minister of Israel

Dear Prime Minister Netanyahu:

I write today to follow up on our previous exchange regarding the village of Susiya, in Area C of the West Bank. I appreciate your response and would like to again urge your government not to demolish Susiya and other villages facing demolition in Area C.

Following my letter of July 28, 2015, I was pleased and grateful for your letter of August 11, 2015, in which you stated your government's commitment to a negotiated resolution with the residents of Susiya. Since then, I have met with two families from the village, both with young children. The children directly conveyed what peace means to them. It was simple: that no one tear down their homes.

As negotiations approach an upcoming October 13, 2015 deadline, I ask again that you not force these families from their land. These villagers simply want to be able to live in their homes, work their land and raise their families in peace.

To do so, the Israeli Civil Administration (ICA) could reverse its previous decision to reject Susiya's proposed master plan. As you know, Susiya's master plan was developed with the help of Rabbis for Human Rights, and was rejected on October 24, 2013 by the ICA.

The Israeli Civil Administration rejected Susiya's master plan by saying living in the area was too expensive, and that the families would be better off living somewhere else. I find the ICA's reasoning flawed given that there is a nearby Israeli settlement that has electricity, running water and approved building permits.

As you know, Palestinians in Area C of the West Bank must receive building permits to build structures even on their own land. Approving Susiya's master plan would allow the residents to construct basic structures for their homes and livestock secure in the knowledge that their livelihoods would not be threatened by demolition.

The ICA's refusal to approve master plans and building permits affects hundreds of Palestinian villages beyond Susiya. According to data recently released by Israeli authorities, today there are more than 11,000 outstanding demolition orders affecting an estimated 13,000 Palestinian structures in Area C of the West Bank.

This situation is not improving. This past August the world witnessed Israel demolish 134 Palestinian structures, including homes, and displace 201 Palestinians. The devastation caused by demolishing these families' homes does in my view hurt the humanity of Israel.

And, unfortunately, the cycle will continue. Today, less than one percent of Area C—18,243 dunums—has any type of approved plan by Israeli authorities for Palestinian development despite a tremendous effort by the European Union and the Palestinian Authority to seek the ICA's approval.

The European Union has provided €1 million to help the Palestinian Authority develop 116 master plans for as many Palestinian communities in Area C. To date, 67 plans have been officially submitted to the ICA but only three have been approved. According to the State Department, villages with approved master plans still do not have specific building permits, meaning they continue to face demolition.

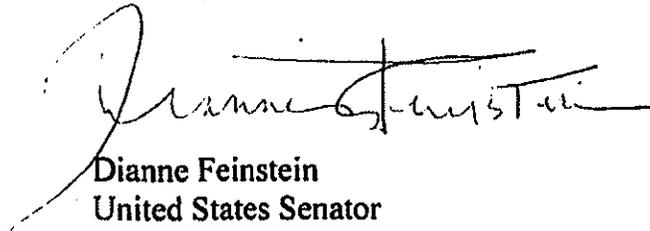
Even though the ICA has not approved master plans for Palestinian villages, it has approved plans for Israeli settlements in the same area of the West Bank. According to the United Nations, the ICA has approved plans for settlements covering 282,174 dunums, or 8.5 percent of Area C. On a per person basis, settlers have more than 13 times more land approved for development in Area C than per Palestinian (0.79 dunum per settler versus 0.06 dunum per Palestinian).

Facilitating Israeli settlement construction while blocking Palestinian construction is not helpful to our shared goal of achieving a two state solution. If there is to ever be a Palestinian state in the West Bank, then this trend of supporting Israeli settlements and repressing Palestinian development on privately-owned Palestinian land must be reversed.

I understand that the ultimate disposition of the West Bank can only be decided through direct negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. However, in the absence of direct talks, I ask that you instruct the ICA to provide fair and equal consideration of Palestinian planning efforts in Area C. At a minimum, the ICA should publish clear and transparent standards for submitting master plans.

Israeli policies in Area C of the West Bank—including the lack of approved plans and published standards— has resulted in a perpetual cycle of construction, demolition and displacement. Palestinian villagers in Susiya, Umm al-Khair and others should not have to live with the fear that their homes and livelihoods can be demolished at any time. I again urge you to find a way to allow them to stay. As always, I appreciate your consideration of my request.

Sincerely,



Dianne Feinstein  
United States Senator

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