

United States Senate

June 1, 2016

The Honorable John Kerry
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street, NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Kerry,

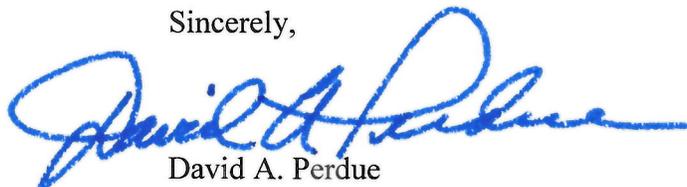
I understand you are going to Paris later this week to participate in the French-hosted meeting to discuss the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. I am still unclear as to what the agenda is and, as you prepare for the meeting, I wanted to share with you some of my concerns regarding the conference and urge you to work to ensure that it does not take steps that will, ultimately, set back the cause of peace.

Central to the constructive role the United States has been able to play over the years in the region are two important factors. First, the U.S. enjoys the trust of the Israelis and the Arabs; and second, I have long understood that, while the U.S. may at times be a useful facilitator, peace between Israel and her neighbors can come only as a result of direct bilateral negotiations. I am concerned that the French-led effort that is about to begin falls short on both of those fronts. Many of those coming to Paris to discuss the conflict have consistently, including recently, supported one-sided, anti-Israel efforts at the UN and its different agencies. Further, these nations do not enjoy the trust of the Israelis. Convening this meeting and considering a follow-on international conference diminishes pressure on the Palestinians to engage in direct talks.

I hope, as you participate in the meeting later this week, that you will work to ensure that those attending do nothing to divert attention from the need for direct talks between Israel and the Palestinians. Likewise, I urge you to push back against any efforts to impose any plan upon the parties or to endorse parameters for future negotiations. As President Obama said during his March 2013 trip to Israel, "There is no question that the only path to peace is through negotiations—which is why...the United States will oppose unilateral efforts to bypass negotiations.... It has to be done by the parties."

I look forward to talking to you about the meeting upon your return and urge you to ensure that the only follow-up to the June 3rd conference is direct bilateral negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians.

Sincerely,



David A. Perdue
United States Senator