

**Congress of the United States**  
**Washington, DC 20515**

October 13, 2022

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
2201 C Street NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

We write to express our continued concern over the antisemitic graffiti found at the State Department's headquarters in Washington, D.C. and at the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria, as well as reports of State Department staff espousing antisemitic views online. We are grateful that immediately following these incidents one year ago, you clearly expressed that these egregious acts are not representative of the State Department or its values and called for an immediate investigation. As the Anti-Defamation League's (ADL) data shows, antisemitism and antisemitic incidents are on the rise in the United States and around the world. This past year alone, ADL's Audit of Antisemitic Incidents recorded 2,717 acts of assault, vandalism, and harassment in the United States, an average of more than seven incidents per day<sup>1</sup>. Given this marked increase in antisemitic incidents, we urge you to update Congress on the status of your investigation into these incidents.

Last year, it was discovered that U.S. Foreign Service Officer Fritz Berggren was running a website where he regularly disparaged Jews. In July 2021, over 70 State Department employees sent you a letter expressing their concern and feelings of insecurity at Mr. Berggren's continued employment. As they said, "Not only is his propagation of antisemitic ideas highly disturbing and offensive to Jewish and non-Jewish employees alike, but as Jewish employees, we feel his presence at the Department is threatening."<sup>2</sup> Despite these pleas from your employees, and his outrageous antisemitism and bigotry, Mr. Berggren remains employed by the State Department. This is beyond alarming.

Additionally, a swastika was found carved in an elevator at the Harry S. Truman building last summer,<sup>3</sup> and another was found painted on a window inside a secure area of the U.S. Embassy in Bulgaria earlier this year.<sup>4</sup> Together, these incidents appear to paint a troubling picture within the State Department.

We appreciate the steps taken immediately by you and President Biden following these incidents to make clear that antisemitism has no place in the State Department, in the Biden

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.adl.org/audit2021>

<sup>2</sup> Robbie Gramer, "We Feel His Presence in the Department is Threatening," August 31, 2021. (<https://foreignpolicy.com/2021/08/31/state-department-antisemitism-antisemitism-blinken-fritz-berggren>)

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2021/07/27/us/politics/state-dept-swastika.html>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.axios.com/2022/02/13/scoop-swastika-discovered-at-us-embassy-in-bulgaria>

Administration, or anywhere in the world. However, more can and must be done to protect the Jewish community, and other religious minorities, at the State Department. We understand and are grateful that an internal review of these incidents is underway. We urge you to continue to investigate and address any and all incidents of antisemitism and hate within the Department.


The Fiscal Year 2023 U.S. House of Representatives' State and Foreign Operations Appropriations report included language requiring the State Department to report to Congress on the status of the investigations into these incidents, including recommendations for how the Department can improve tolerance and non-discrimination among its staff. However, this issue is too urgent, and it cannot wait for the appropriations process to finish. Instead, it needs immediate attention.

We call on you to report back to Congress on the status of your investigation into these incidents, and on the general existence of antisemitism within the State Department. We also call on you to report on what your office plans to do to improve tolerance and non-discrimination, including working with organizations like the Anti-Defamation League (ADL) to institute targeted training and promote better understanding. State Department employees are our representatives to the world. We must ensure that hate, in all forms, is not present within the Department.

We stand ready to assist the State Department as you work to ensure that Jewish American employees are fully included, supported, and protected in government service.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



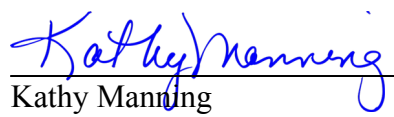
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Grace Meng  
Member of Congress




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Brian Fitzpatrick  
Member of Congress



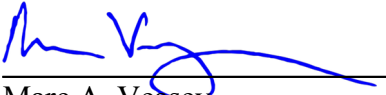
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Kathy Manning  
Member of Congress



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Randy K. Weber, Sr.  
Member of Congress



Marc A. Veasey  
Member of Congress



Kay Granger  
Member of Congress



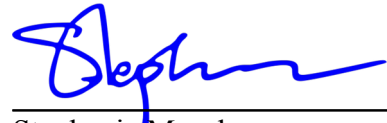
Ted W. Lieu  
Member of Congress



Christopher H. Smith  
Member of Congress



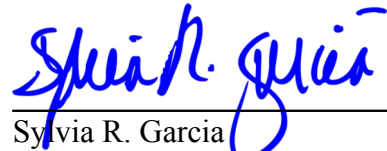
Debbie Wasserman Schultz  
Member of Congress



Stephanie Murphy  
Member of Congress



David J. Trone  
Member of Congress




Sylvia R. Garcia  
Member of Congress



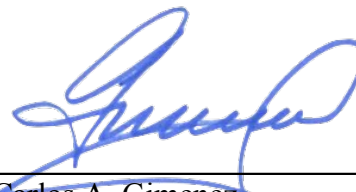
Alan Lowenthal  
Member of Congress



Maria Elvira Salazar  
Member of Congress



Jackie Speier  
Member of Congress



Carlos A. Gimenez  
Member of Congress



Lauren Underwood  
Member of Congress



Frederica S. Wilson  
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Dina Titus  
Member of Congress



Gerald E. Connolly  
Member of Congress



Zoe Lofgren  
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Marilyn Strickland  
Member of Congress



Julia Brownley  
Member of Congress

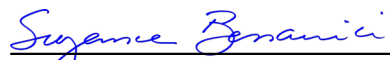


Donald M. Payne, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Bill Johnson  
Member of Congress



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Suzanne Bonamici  
Member of Congress



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Andy Kim  
Member of Congress



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Brad Sherman  
Member of Congress



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Ilhan Omar  
Member of Congress



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Andy Levin  
Member of Congress



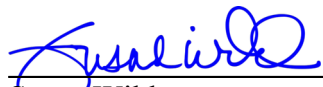
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Steve Cohen  
Member of Congress



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Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress



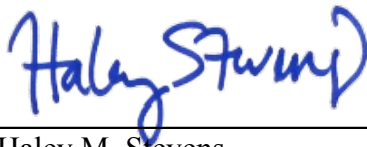
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Susan Wild  
Member of Congress



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Ritchie Torres  
Member of Congress



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Haley M. Stevens  
Member of Congress



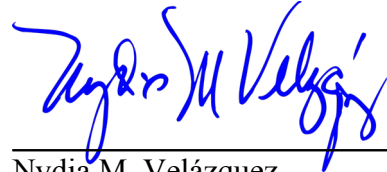
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Sheila Jackson Lee  
Member of Congress



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Bonnie Watson Coleman  
Member of Congress



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Nydia M. Velázquez  
Member of Congress



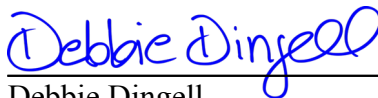
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Carolyn B. Maloney  
Member of Congress



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Thomas R. Suozzi  
Member of Congress



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Debbie Dingell  
Member of Congress



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Mark DeSaulnier  
Member of Congress



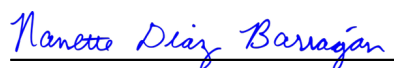
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Kathleen M. Rice  
Member of Congress



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André Carson  
Member of Congress



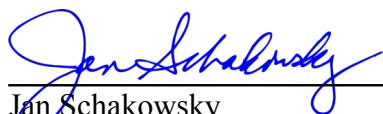
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Nanette Diaz Barragán  
Member of Congress



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Lucille Roybal-Allard  
Member of Congress



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Jan Schakowsky  
Member of Congress



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Josh Gottheimer  
Member of Congress



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Norma J. Torres  
Member of Congress



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Mike Levin  
Member of Congress



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Adam B. Schiff  
Member of Congress



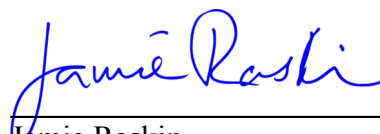
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Bill Pascrell, Jr.  
Member of Congress



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Chris Pappas  
Member of Congress



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Jamie Raskin  
Member of Congress



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C. Scott Franklin  
Member of Congress



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Frank Pallone, Jr.  
Member of Congress



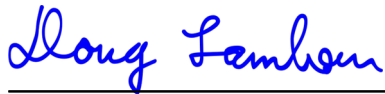
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Juan Vargas  
Member of Congress



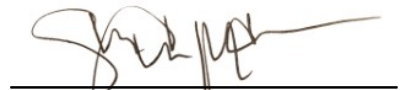
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Brenda L. Lawrence  
Member of Congress



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Doug Lamborn  
Member of Congress



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Sheila Cherfilus-McCormick  
Member of Congress



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John Yarmuth  
Member of Congress



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Adriano Espaillat  
Member of Congress



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Susie Lee  
Member of Congress



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Randy Feenstra  
Member of Congress





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Lois Frankel  
Member of Congress



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Nicole Malliotakis  
Member of Congress



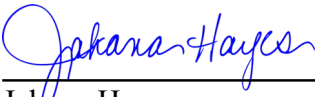
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Mike Quigley  
Member of Congress



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Dwight Evans  
Member of Congress



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Jahana Hayes  
Member of Congress



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Rick Larsen  
Member of Congress



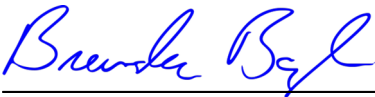
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Andrew R. Garbarino  
Member of Congress



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Darren Soto  
Member of Congress



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Brendan F. Boyle  
Member of Congress



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Eleanor Holmes Norton  
Member of Congress



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Mike Thompson  
Member of Congress