United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510-0905

December 21, 2005

The Honorable George W. Bush
The President
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

We are writing you out of deep concern over the upcoming Palestinian legislative elections and the question of terrorist groups such as Hamas participating in these elections. As you stated just a few months ago in discussing Hamas' participation: "You cannot have a democracy based upon a rule of law if you have armed bands of people who will use their weapons to try to achieve a political outcome." We agree completely. Nevertheless, we are concerned that Hamas will be able to field candidates for the upcoming elections without disarming and without committing to an agreed set of basic principles concerning violence and democratic values.

We are deeply disappointed that President Abbas has yet to do what the Palestinian Authority has committed to doing on numerous occasions – asserting its control over the terrorist groups that operate freely within the West Bank and Gaza. We therefore urge you to press the Palestinian leadership to use the leverage they now have with these terrorist groups to insist that they adhere to a basic set of principles before they can run for political office. No democracy in the world allows a political party to bear its own arms; Palestinian democracy should be no different. If such principles are not established now, it will be much more difficult to do later. Furthermore, if terrorist groups gain a substantial foothold in the Palestinian legislature, it will make it exceedingly difficult, if not impossible, for there to be any progress on the roadmap or on the road to achieving a two state solution.

There would be even more severe policy implications if any such groups were then brought into the Palestinian Authority. The United States – and no doubt other countries as well – would have little choice but to reevaluate all aspects of our relations with the Palestinian Authority.

We hope it never gets to that point. We look forward to working with you over the next few months to make it clear to Palestinian leaders that terrorist groups must either disarm or be barred from the political process.

Sincerely,

Bill Nelson

Jim Talent

Ted Stevens

Debbie Stabenow

Mark Dayton

Carl Levin

Kit Bond

George Allen

John Ensign

Jim DeMint

Hillary Rodham Clinton

Tom Harkin

Mark Pryor

Tom Kyl

Jack Reed

George V. Voinovich

John Cornyn

Susan Collins

Mike Crapo

Dick Durbin

Wayne Allard

Kent Conrad

Elizabeth Dole

Ken Salazar

Ben Nelson

Mary Landrieu

Tim Johnson

Chuck Grassley

Richard Shelby

Barbara Boxer

Sam Brownback

Dianne Feinstein

Herb Kohl

Byron L. Dorgan

Frank R. Lautenberg

Kent Conrad

Russell D. Feingold

Barbara A. Mikulski

David Vitter

Charles Schumer

Jon Kirk

Daniel K. Inouye

Jim Bunning

Trent Lott

Max Baucus

Jim F. Kerry

Conrad Burns

Jim Wyle

C. H. Smith

Don Coleman

Paul S. Sarbanes

Blanche L. Lincoln

Nils DeWine

Jon Ul. Colin

Harry Reid

John McCain

Bob Dole

Patty Murray

Maria Cantwell