Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

July 25, 2014

Her Excellency Navi Pillay
High Commissioner for Human Rights
United Nations
Dear Madame High Commissioner,

The United Nations Human Rights Council simply cannot be taken seriously as a human rights organization when it establishes a commission of inquiry to unjustly probe alleged war crimes and violations of international law by the nation defending its citizens from rocket attacks and terror tunnels, rather than the terrorist group whose depravity makes a policy of using its citizens as human shields while its terror commanders flee to fortified bunkers. While we are saddened by the tragic loss of innocent life on both sides of this conflict, it is Hamas, a United States and European Union designated foreign terrorist organization, that has refused to de-escalate this conflict by agreeing to internationally backed cease-fires and continuing to indiscriminately launch rockets at Israeli civilian population centers.

Hamas' continued use of civilians as human shields is a direct violation of international law. In addition to embedding its terrorist infrastructure within civilian populations, Hamas' officials are encouraging civilians to ignore Israel's warnings of incoming strikes and stay in their homes. According to a translation by the Middle East Media Research Institute, in a July 8th interview on Al-Aqsa TV, Hamas spokesman Sami Abu Zuhri stated that "*The policy of people confronting the Israeli warplanes with their bare chests in order to protect their homes has proven effective against the occupation. Also, this policy reflects the character of our brave, courageous people. We in Hamas call upon our people to adopt this policy in order to protect the Palestinian homes.*" Simply put, Hamas intentionally puts Palestinian lives in harm's way and wants its own people to be killed rather than heed warnings to seek safety.

We would also like to draw your attention to Hamas' use of schools, hospitals and mosques as covers for their rocket launchers and weapons caches. In the last week, the United Nations Relief and Works Agency has found two separate instances of rockets hidden in its schools. Reportedly, these weapons were then given back to leaders in Gaza. As you stated this week, "I further emphasize that it is unacceptable to locate military assets in densely populated areas or to launch attacks from such areas." On July 17th, the *Washington Post* reported that during the brief humanitarian cease-fire "a group of men at a mosque in northern Gaza said they had returned to clean up the green glass from windows shattered in the previous day's bombardment. But they could be seen moving small rockets into the mosque."

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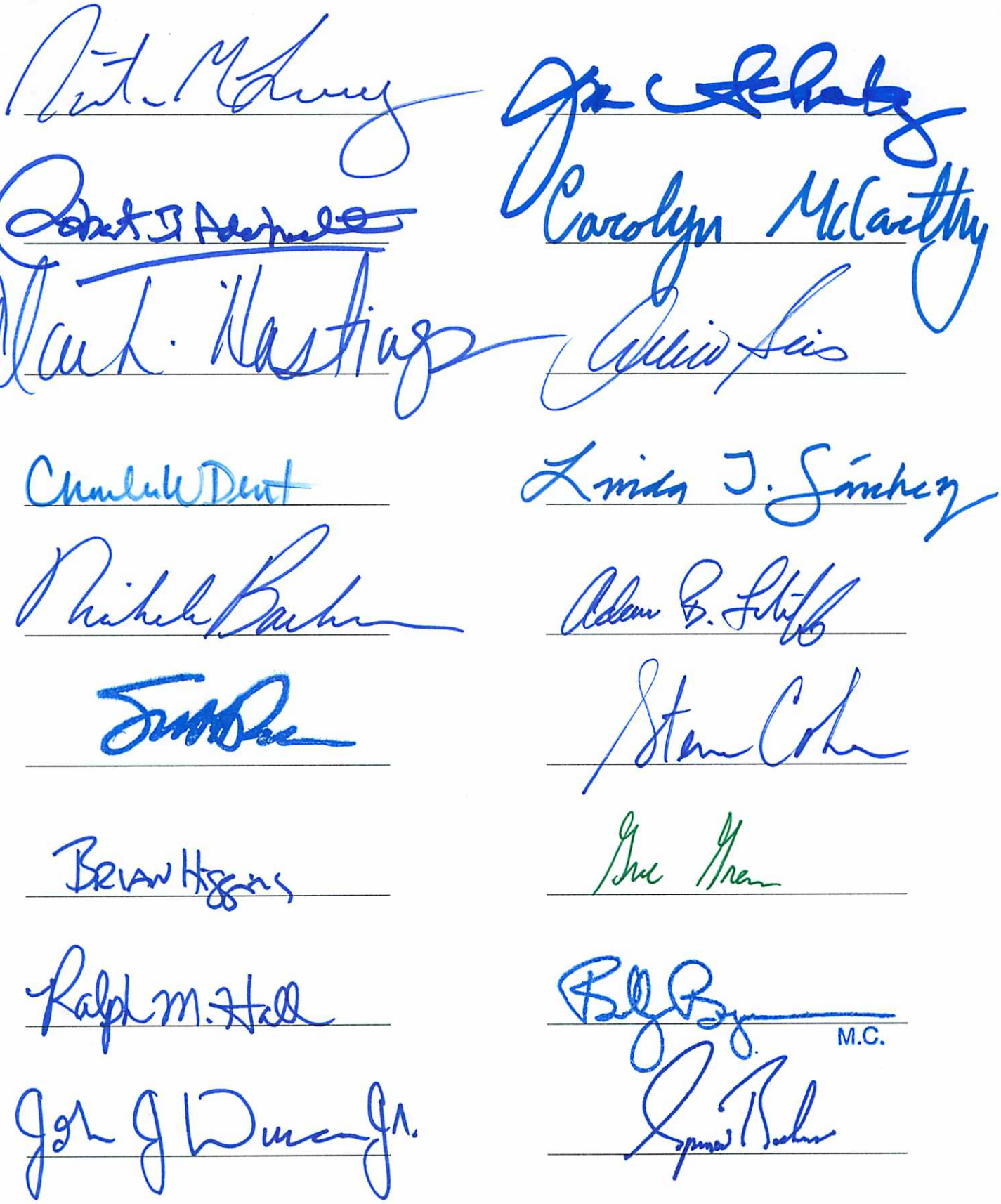
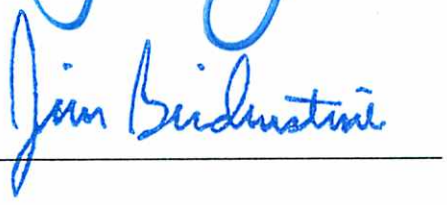
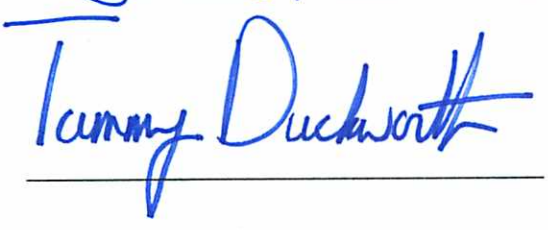
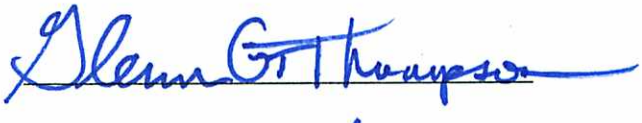
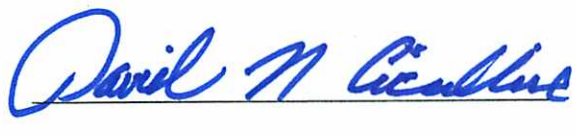
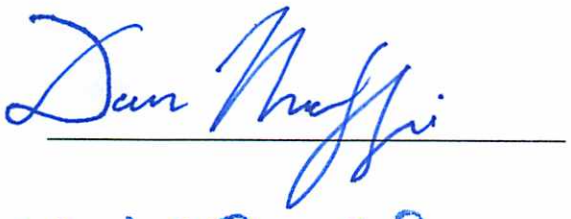
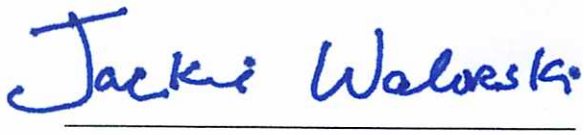
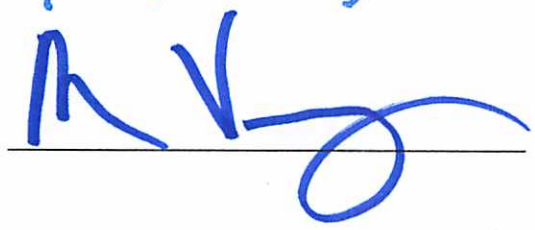
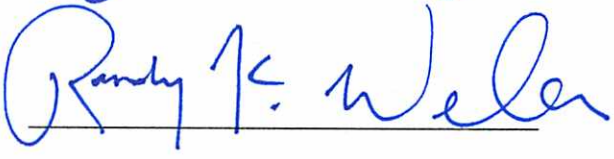
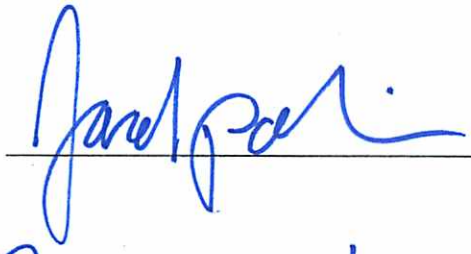
The use of civilians as human shields is in direct contravention of international law. Additional Protocol I, Article 51 (7) of the Geneva Convention states, "[T]he presence or movement of the civilian population or individual civilians shall not be used to render certain points or areas immune from military operations, in particular in attempts to shield, favour or impede military operations. The Parties to the conflict shall not direct the movement of the civilian population or individual civilians in order to attempt to shield military objectives from attacks or to shield military operations."

These grave violations of international law cannot be ignored. Any nation or multilateral body that values human rights must condemn the use of civilians as human shields. This is the effort the United Nations should be leading and you should be speaking out against.

Sincerely,

STEVE ISRAEL TED DEUTCH ILEANA ROS-LEHTINEN TOM COLE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