

Ackerman, Boustany team on P.A. support

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A Jewish congressman and an Arab-American colleague are soliciting signatures for a letter urging greater U.S. funding for Palestinian Authority reforms.

Rep. Gary Ackerman (D-N.Y.), the Jewish chairman of the U.S. House of Representatives Middle East subcommittee, and Rep. Charles Boustany (R-La.) initiated the letter.

"We are writing to both commend you for your efforts to reinvigorate the Israeli-Palestinian peace process by convening an international meeting this fall and to respectfully suggest that additional measures by the United States in the near term will be necessary to preserve the possibility of success," says the letter circulating in the House. "U.S. assistance should be used -- and should be designed to leverage international support -- for financial and personnel reforms in the Palestinian Authority, for housing or other labor intensive projects, for the effective operation of a Palestinian police force and an independent Palestinian judiciary, and for long-term economic development and job creation programs."

The letter is backed by an array of dovish pro-Israel groups, including Americans for Peace Now, the Israel Policy Forum and Brit Tzedek v'Shalom as well as Churches for Middle East Peace, a coalition of mainline churches; the Arab American Institute and the American task Force on Palestine.

The American Israel Public Affairs Committee has not taken a position on the letter.