

July 27, 2016

The Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

Dear Mr. President:

As you consider the legacy of your presidency, we urge you to make an official visit to Tunisia, to demonstrate concretely the commitment you made during President Essebsi's visit in May 2015 that "the United States believes in Tunisia, is invested in its success, and will work as a steady partner for years to come." Your visit to Tunisia would energize and reassure Tunisia's citizens and political leaders, sending a powerful signal of American support as the country struggles with the enormous challenges of building accountable institutions and a democratic society.

In 2009 in Cairo, you inspired citizens across the Middle East and North Africa by declaring a commitment to "common principles -- principles of justice and progress; tolerance and the dignity of all human beings." In the Arab world today, Tunisia stands alone as the one country where those principles of justice, progress, and tolerance have prevailed against all odds over the past five years.

Your Deputy National Security Advisor Ben Rhodes said in January that you would seek to consolidate your foreign policy legacy this year by traveling widely and by working with allies to combat extremism and foster the rise of emerging democracies. There is no more important example of an emerging democracy in the world today than Tunisia, which has achieved historic progress through compromise and consensus-building. It is impossible to overstate the value that a successful transition to democracy in Tunisia could have for the entire region.

In addition, Tunisia is both the newest major non-NATO U.S. ally and an important partner in the counter-ISIL coalition that, with U.S. support, is demonstrating increasing effectiveness at fighting extremism at home and across its borders. A visit to Tunisia would allow you to highlight a rare example of progress in countering extremism in a region too often defined by rising extremism and violent conflict.

Finally, Tunisia presents a unique opportunity in a difficult election-year climate here at home, as a positive story that enjoys bipartisan support in Congress and as a North African country where both

the government and the people want greater U.S. engagement. We strongly urge you to travel to Tunisia to demonstrate the depth of U.S. support for its historic democratic transition and to underscore your administration's commitment to its success as a model in the Arab world.

Sincerely,

Stephen McInerney

Executive Director

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Ambassador Rust Deming, Ret.

U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, 2001-2003

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U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, 1991-1994

Joseph Lieberman

U.S. Senator, 1989-2013

Jane Harman

U.S. Congresswoman, 1993-1999, 2001-2011

Jim Kolbe

U.S. Congressman, 1985-2007

Nancy Johnson

U.S. Congresswoman, 1983-2007

Jim Moody

U.S. Congressman, 1983-1993

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Director of Policy Planning,

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Ambassador Frank G. Wisner, Ret.

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Special Assistant to the President & Senior Director National Security Council, 2009-2012

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U.S. Ambassador to Tunisia, 2004-2006

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David Dreier

U.S. Congressman, 1981-2013

Lynn Woolsey

U.S. Congresswoman, 1993-2013

Robert "Bud" Cramer

U.S. Congressman 1991-2009

Benjamin Chandler

U.S. Congressman, 2004-2013

Ambassador Melanne Vermeer, Ret.

Ambassador at Large for Global Women's Issues 2009-2013

Ambassador Paul Wolfowitz, Ret.

Deputy Secretary of Defense, 2001-2005

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U.S. Ambassador to Morocco 1985-1988

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