The Honorable Antony Blinken  
Secretary of State  
U.S. Department of State  
Washington, DC 20520

Mr. Christopher Wray  
Director  
Federal Bureau of Investigations  
Washington, D.C. 20535

May 19, 2022

Dear Mr. Secretary and Director Wray:

We are writing you regarding the recent death of Shireen Abu Akleh, a 51 year-old Palestinian American. Ms. Abu Akleh, a journalist for Al Jazeera, was fatally shot in the West Bank city of Jenin on May 11, 2022. We request the State Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) launch an investigation into the death of Ms. Abu Akleh.

AP News reported that Ms. Abu Akleh was fatally shot in the head on the outskirts of the Jenin refugee camp in the northern West Bank. Her producer, Palestinian journalist Ali Samoudi, was hospitalized in stable condition after being shot in the back. It was also reported that Palestinian journalists who were with Ms. Abu Akleh and Mr. Samoudi at the time said that they made their presence known to Israeli soldiers, and they did not see militants in the area. The Israeli military claimed that the victims were caught between gunfire between Palestinian militants and Israeli Defense Forces. However, media and eyewitnesses had conflicting reports. Shaza Hanaysheh, another Palestinian journalist among the reporters, also said that there were no clashes or shootings in the immediate area. News reports from the Washington Post, New York Times, CNN, and Aljazeera also highlight these conflicting reports.

As Members of Congress, we are deeply concerned by the death of Ms. Abu Akleh. Journalists worldwide must be protected at all costs. The U.S. State Department called Ms. Abu Akleh’s death “an affront to media freedom.” We welcome the actions and statements taken so far by the U.S. Department of State supporting a thorough investigation. However, given the tenuous situation in the region and the conflicting reports surrounding the death of Ms. Abu Akleh, we request the State Department and the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) launch an investigation into Ms. Abu Akleh’s death. We also request the U.S. Department of State determine whether any U.S. laws protecting Ms. Abu Akleh, an American citizen, were violated.

As an American, Ms. Abu Akleh was entitled to the full protections afforded to U.S. citizens living abroad. We, the undersigned Members of Congress, urge you to uphold the values that our nation was founded on, including human rights, equality for all, and freedom of speech. We have a duty to protect Americans reporting abroad. We look forward to your timely response.

Sincerely,
Jamaal Bowman, Ed.D.
Member of Congress

Eleanor Holmes Norton
Member of Congress

Ilhan Omar
Member of Congress

John Garamendi
Member of Congress

Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress

Mark Pocan
Member of Congress

Jerry McNerney
Member of Congress

Susan Wild
Member of Congress

Peter Welch
Member of Congress

Mike Thompson
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Betty McCollum  
Member of Congress

Donald S. Beyer Jr.  
Member of Congress

Jesús G. "Chuy" García  
Member of Congress

Gwen S. Moore  
Member of Congress

Zoe Lofgren  
Member of Congress

Jackie Speier  
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Seth Moulton  
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Alma S. Adams, Ph.D.  
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Alan Lowenthal  
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Tom Malinowski
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Katherine M. Clark
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Member of Congress

Joaquin Castro
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David E. Price
Member of Congress

Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress

Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress

Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress

Peter A. DeFazio
Member of Congress
Chellie Pingree
Member of Congress

Jan Schakowsky
Member of Congress

CORI BUSH
Member of Congress

Daniel T. Kildee
Member of Congress

Bonnie Watson Coleman
Member of Congress

Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
Member of Congress

/s/
Sheila Jackson Lee
Member of Congress