

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

The Honorable Rex W. Tillerson
Secretary of State
United States Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

March 14, 2017

Dear Secretary Tillerson:

Congratulations on your recent confirmation as Secretary of State. We look forward to working with you on the numerous foreign policy issues facing our nation in the years to come.

As you are undoubtedly aware, Macedonia has been entrenched in a process of building its own coalition government after elections held in December of 2016. Unfortunately, we have received credible reports that, over the past few years, the U.S. Mission there has actively intervened in the party politics of Macedonia, as well as in the shaping of its media environment and civil society, often favoring left-leaning political groups over others. We find these reports discouraging and, if true, highly problematic.

Several letters were recently sent to the U.S. Ambassador to Macedonia inquiring into the role the U.S. Mission to Macedonia plays in the distribution of U.S. foreign aid in Macedonia, the ongoing and sometimes tumultuous Macedonian political landscape, and in shaping Macedonia's media environment and civil society. The responses to these letters have not alleviated our concern.

Much of the concerning activity in Macedonia has been perpetuated through USAID funds awarded to implementing entities such as George Soros' Open Society Foundations. As the recipient of multiple grant awards and serving as a USAID contractor implementing projects in this small nation of 2.1 million people, our taxpayer funded foreign aid goes far, allowing Foundation Open Society – Macedonia (FOSM) to push a progressive agenda and invigorate the political left. Our foreign aid should only be used to promote a political agenda if it is in the security or economic interests of our country to do so, and even at that, we must be cautious and respectful in such an endeavor. We should be especially wary of promoting policies that remain controversial even in our own country and that have the potential to harm our relationship with the citizens of recipient countries.

This problem is not limited to Macedonia, but appears to follow a pattern of alarming activity in this volatile region. Respected leaders from Albania have made similar claims of US diplomats and Soros-backed organizations pushing for certain political outcomes in their country. Foundation Open Society – Albania (FOSA) and its experts, with funding from USAID, have created the controversial Strategy Document for Albanian Judicial Reform. Some leaders believe that these "reforms" are ultimately aimed to give the Prime Minister and left-of-center government full control over judiciary power.

The destabilizing effects of such actions in a NATO country are clear and the threat for further escalation eminent as Albania anticipates parliamentary elections later this year. This is especially concerning in light of international reports of increasing government corruption in Albania and the renewed power of drug trafficking and organized criminal groups in the country.

With these and other situations in mind, it is troubling that this behavior seems to have become a default for many of our embassies, AID missions, and diplomatic outposts throughout the world. Time and again, foreign leaders visiting Washington have expressed concerns to us about how American taxpayer funds are being used counterproductively in their respective countries. The situations in Albania and Macedonia are timely examples of this, but we have heard similar concerns from Latin American and African nations as well.

We respectfully ask that you use your authority to investigate all funds associated with promoting democracy and governance and review the programs, accounts, and multiplicity of U.S. entities involved in such activities. We must take this critical moment – at the start of a new administration – to review how all our tax dollars are being utilized in order to halt activities that are fomenting political unrest, disrespecting national sovereignty and civil society, and ultimately undermining our attempts to build beneficial international relationships.

We look forward to continuing to work with you and hope to begin a relationship of mutual desire for accountability and transparency in our foreign aid and diplomatic programs.

Sincerely,



Michael S. Lee
United States Senate



James M. Inhofe
United States Senate



Thom Tillis
United States Senate



David A. Perdue
United States Senate



Ted Cruz
United States Senate



Bill Cassidy, M.D.
United States Senate

