

**PETER J. ROSKAM**

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**Congress of the United States**

**House of Representatives**

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June 5, 2015

His Excellency François Hollande  
President of the French Republic  
55 Rue du Faubourg Saint-Honoré  
75008 Paris, France

Dear President Hollande:

Yesterday, Orange S.A. announced plans to undertake a politically motivated break with Israeli subsidiary Partner Communications. Orange CEO Stéphane Richard said, *“Our intention is to withdraw from Israel. It will take time [but] for sure we will do it...I am ready to do this tomorrow morning...but without exposing Orange to huge risks.”* These comments came after a long campaign by promoters of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement to get Orange to sever ties with Partner, including a pro-BDS protest at the Orange annual general meeting in Paris in May. As you know, the French government owns a substantial stake in Orange. Due to the discriminatory and deleterious nature of this economic attack against one of America’s closest allies, I am urging you, on behalf of the French Republic, to reject these comments immediately.

France is home to Western Europe’s largest Jewish community. Cutting off economic ties with an Israeli company in political protest will only advance the cause of hatred and intolerance in France and throughout the world. It certainly won’t help achieve peace in the Middle East, and it moves the global economy in a dangerous and unproductive direction. Mr. Richard’s claim that the decision to break with Partner is not “political” is shamelessly flimsy.

The United States has, and will continue, to stand with our ally Israel and oppose the growing global BDS campaign. For decades, the United States has opposed these efforts to isolate and delegitimize Israel. For example, Congressional action in the 1970s successfully stopped U.S. companies from participating in the Arab League Boycott. Recently, language I authored to combat the BDS movement was adopted into bipartisan Trade Promotion Authority legislation currently pending before Congress. These provisions would make it a principal negotiating objective for future trade agreements to push our European partners to reject the BDS movement. I am hopeful that Congress will pass this legislation promptly.

Mr. President, I urge you to take this opportunity to reject Orange’s efforts to marginalize and economically destabilize Israel. France and the United States have a long and fruitful

partnership rooted in extensive strategic and economic cooperation, and economic attacks such as this against our mutual friend Israel cannot be left unanswered.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Roskam", with a large, stylized initial "R" that loops back.

PETER J. ROSKAM  
Member of Congress

cc: The Honorable Gérard Araud  
Ambassador of France to the United States  
4101 Reservoir Road, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20007