

January 2, 2014

Honorable Barack Obama
President of the United States of America
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. President,

I am writing to ask that you commute the prison sentence of Jonathan Pollard. I knew the circumstances surrounding the case as well as anyone. I served on the Senate Select Committee on Intelligence from 1979-1986 and as its Chair during the 1985-86 session of the Congress. The Pollard arrest on charges of spying for Israel, as well as cases involving the arrest of several other Americans for providing classified secrets to foreign countries, came before the committee in 1985 during a year weekly news magazines called "The Year of the Spy." Knowing the circumstances behind each of these cases, I can recall my surprise at the sentence given Jonathan Pollard compared to others.

I recall as well the vehemence of the Defense Secretary's reaction to the revelation, since I was aware as Chair of the Committee of changes that we were told by intelligence agency heads had taken place in traditional agreements between the U.S. and Israel on the subject of spying. Of course Pollard broke the law and his conviction was deserved. But the harshness of his sentence, in light of existing relations between our countries and the nature of our observation of implicit agreements between the countries, was uncalled for. And within the parameters of confidentiality imposed on me as Chair of the Committee, I expressed that opinion at the time.

The fact that no President has chosen to take the action which I, and many of my former colleagues and associates in government, request that you take, Mr. President, does not reflect well on the office. I believe in my heart that you have the capacity to right this wrong. And I respectfully request that you do so at your early convenience.

Sincerely,



David Durenberger
U.S. Senator (R-MN) 1978-95