Dear Friends,

While this past month commenced with the heinous terrorist attacks in France, they were followed by several days of unprecedented unity and solidarity among the French and American people, as well as the international community. Like each and every one of you, I was devastated by the tragedies that took place at Charlie Hebdo in Paris on January 7, and at a kosher market in the city just two days later.

These attacks threatened the core values of freedom of expression and of the press, and our fundamental ideals of liberty and tolerance. In this special issue of News From France, you will read about the extraordinary support lent by the United States, which stood alongside France in the wake of these despicable acts. While it is difficult to be away from home when your country is in danger, I was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support, both from ordinary citizens—thousands of them wrote to us to express their sympathy—and high-ranking officials: among those who came to sign a condolence book at the embassy were President Barack Obama and Secretary of State John Kerry. I was also deeply moved by the numerous ceremonies organized in Washington, including by the U.S. Congress and the American Jewish Community.

Here in the United States, I was amazed by the huge response to the attacks, as American and French people around the country mobilized in support of France, and to mourn those who had died in defense of democratic ideals. In cities across the country, from New York to Chicago, from Washington to Los Angeles, peaceful marches were held in remembrance of the victims and those who had fought to protect them. I was proud to march alongside thousands of people at a silent march in Washington, D.C. Having lived through the horrific terrorist attacks in New York on September 11, 2001, Americans have not forgotten what it is like to see their city, their country, in a state of crisis. In the wake of the horrific events in Paris, I have never been more confident in the strong bonds that exist between France and the U.S.

As we go forward, it is important to remember that both of our countries stand together in the fight to preserve the ideals that were threatened during those tragic days. From Boston to Sydney, from Canada to Pakistan, Nigeria or the Middle East, we are facing the same global threats posed by terrorism, anti-Semitism, and intolerance. We will never surrender to these threats. The French government has announced a number of exceptional measures to combat terrorism, to bolster security in France and to strengthen the fight against anti-Semitic and xenophobic sentiments. Among the many challenges we are facing, I really look forward to working with Americans and the rest of the international community to address terrorism at the global summit to be held in Washington, D.C. on February 18.
Officials and community leaders show their support

After the first attack in France, Ambassador Gérard Araud gathered the entire French Embassy staff for a moment of silence, and expressed how difficult it was for French citizens to be away from their home country as it was being threatened.

Shocked by these unspeakable acts of terror, leaders in Washington stepped up to offer sentiments of solidarity and grieve with the French people. Just a day after the attack on the offices of Charlie Hebdo, President Barack Obama came to the embassy to sign a book of condolence which was started at the request of numerous officials who wished to express their sympathies with France.

In his note, President Obama wrote that the United States will stand with France “to ensure that justice is done and our way of life is defended.” He spoke with pride of the countries’ enduring shared values, insisting that “We go forward together knowing that terror is no match for freedom and the ideals we stand for—ideals that light the world,” and concluded his uplifting message with “Vive la France!”

On January 9, Secretary of State John Kerry paid a visit to the embassy to sign the same book, expressing his profound condolences in a note which emphasized the gravity of this event, saying, “The meaning of Charlie Hebdo will never be silenced. The idea of freedom of expression is too powerful.”

Over the next few days, many more Washington officials visited the embassy to express their solidarity with the French people in this book, including IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde, President of World Bank Jim Yong Kim, and ambassadors from countries all over the world. Members of U.S. Congress reached out to the embassy to show their support, as well. On January 12, Ambassador Araud visited both the Senate and the House of Representatives, meeting with senators and congressmen who offered their support for France and signed a book of condolence.

Ambassador Araud met with the Senate Majority Leader Mitch McConnell and other members of the Senate, including Bob Corker, Chairman of the Committee on Foreign Relations, as well as John Boozman, Dianne Feinstein, and Rand Paul. At the House Committee on Foreign Affairs, dozens of congressmen lined up to sign the book of condolence. Ambassador Araud stood beside Representative Ed Royce, the chairman of the committee, as well as Eliot Engel, the committee’s ranking member.

Jewish representatives expressed their unity with France as well, as the American Jewish Community (AJC) held a ceremony of solidarity and remembrance on January 13 at the Adas Israel Congregation in Washington. Ambassador Araud spoke to about 700 people at the ceremony, as well as officials which included White House Chief of Staff Denis McDonough and several congressmen and women, including Representative Debbie Wasserman Schultz of Florida.

At a time when the French community in the U.S. felt particularly far away from their home, many found comfort in the words left by citizens writing from towns and cities across America.

In the aftermath of the attacks, the French Embassy is profoundly grateful not only for the senators, representatives, high-ranking officials, and ambassadors who have offered their support in the nation’s capital, but also for the thousands of messages from ordinary citizens that continue to arrive on a daily basis.
Secretary of State John Kerry signs a condolence book at the French Embassy in Washington on January 9; IMF Managing Director Christine Lagarde writes a condolence message at the French Embassy on January 9; Ambassador Araud speaks at the Adas Israel Congregation on January 13; Representatives Ed Royce and Eliot Engel leave their messages of solidarity at the House Committee on Foreign Affairs; Senators Mitch McConnell and Bob Corker sign a condolence book at the Senate Foreign Relations Committee alongside Ambassador Araud on January 11.
Following attacks, Americans gather with French in solidarity

Following the recent terrorist attacks that took place in Paris, French and American communities around the U.S. came together to honor those who lost their lives, as well as the police forces that worked tirelessly to protect the communities threatened by the attacks. Many of the powerful gatherings took place on January 11, in conjunction with the national March of Unity in Paris.

March in Washington, D.C.

On January 11, a crowd of several thousands of people gathered in downtown Washington, D.C. for a silent march organized by the French Embassy. The gathering began at the Newseum, a museum dedicated to the ideals of free speech and freedom of the press. Leading the march were distinguished officials, representing the immense international support network for the French people. Along with Ambassador Gérard Araud, official representation included Managing Director of the International Monetary Fund (IMF) Christine Lagarde, the State Department’s Assistant Secretary of State for European and Eurasian Affairs Victoria Nuland, and several ambassadors.

The march concluded with a moment of silence at the National Law Enforcement Officers Memorial followed by a rendition of France’s national anthem, La Marseillaise. This march gave the public the opportunity to honor not only the victims of the attacks, but also the brave law enforcement forces that risked their lives to protect the safety of those in danger.

Unity around the country

French and American local communities around the United States showed their support through local rallies and marches throughout the week. In New York, on Saturday January 10, a grieving crowd of nearly 2,000 people filled Washington Square Park carrying signs and banners bearing supportive messages of resilience. Among them were IMF Director Christine Lagarde, French Permanent Representative to the United Nations François Delattre, and Consul General of France Bertrand Lortholary.

The French and American communities of Boston united in Boston Common, the United States’ oldest park, in remembrance of those who lost their lives. Organized by the Consular Councilors of New England and the Consulate of France in Boston, the nearly 2,000 attendees recognized a moment of silence before gathering around the monument dedicated to the French patriot Marquis de Lafayette, an enduring symbol of Franco-American friendship.

Roughly 2,000 people assembled in front of City Hall in San Francisco on January 11. In Chicago, a Solidarity Rally for Freedom and Tolerance united local communities to offer their condolences to those affected by the tragedy.

The southern regions of the United States were fully mobilized to organize demonstrations following the attacks. Atlanta hosted a silent march of approximately 600 people on January 7 while various spontaneously organized groups assembled across the southeast in locations including Charlotte, Nashville, Raleigh, NC and Greenville, SC.

In Louisiana, a state with strong French ties, expressions of unity following the tragedy were important. In New Orleans, Consul General Gregor Trumel and fellow members of the consulate were present at a gathering hosted by the Bilingual School of New Orleans, alongside several professors from CODIFIL, the Council for the Development of French in Louisiana, and friends of France in Louisiana.

“Vive la France”

While the marches held in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris bore a somber tone of solidarity and unity with the French people, they also expressed messages of hope for the future of democracy, and an unwillingness to retreat or be silenced in the presence of threats of terrorism. These hopeful messages will continue to resound throughout the world.

The international community’s rousing response in support of France served as a humbling example of peaceful and democratic unity. The large-scale mobilization efforts seen across the country served as a tribute to the historic and cultural camaraderie shared by the United States and France, its oldest ally. As the birthplace of the ideals of “liberté, égalité, fraternité,” France continues to exemplify the ideals of a free, democratic society for people around the world.
Clockwise from top left: a crowd of over 3,000 people gathers outside the Newseum in Washington, D.C. on January 11; young students participate in the demonstration in Washington Square Park, New York on January 7; a child gazes at the crowd assembled outside of San Francisco’s City Hall on January 11; a gathering held outside of Chicago’s Daley plaza; children and adults stand around a candlelight vigil held in Dallas on January 9.
Messages of condolence across the United States

“As allies across the centuries, we stand united with our French brothers and sisters to ensure that justice is done and our way of life is defended. We go forward together knowing that terror is no match for freedom and the ideals we stand for — ideals that light the world.”

— President Barack Obama

“We stand with you in sorrow and determination to never allow the nihilism of an act of fear to deter us for an instant from our love for and commitment to freedom.”

— Secretary of State John Kerry

Clockwise from top left: President Obama’s condolence note; messages left by citizens in San Francisco; John Kerry’s condolence note; flowers in front of the French Embassy in Washington; messages from a solidarity gathering in Chicago.
Condolence messages from the embassy’s website

Immediately following the attacks, the Embassy of France opened an electronic condolence book, inviting people across the U.S. to express their sorrow and solidarity with France. Below, you will find just a few messages among the thousands received by the embassy, relaying emotions of unity and hope.

I express my sincere condolences to the families of those innocent people who lost their lives in today’s terrorist attack at the office of the French newspaper Charlie Hebdo. This horrific attack on an independent media outlet is an attack against our values and our freedoms. France and the United States have stood shoulder to shoulder throughout history to defend these shared ideals, and today, we stand again in solidarity with the French people and its government as they seek to bring to justice the perpetrators of this attack.

—Senator Robert Menendez

My deepest sympathies to the citizens of France, and particularly the families and friends of the murdered cartoonists, police officers, and members of the Jewish community. Thanks to you all for the courage and resolve you have shown. France continues to lead the way as a force for civilizing human behavior, and that leadership is deeply appreciated.

Vive la France

—J.A. (Boston, MA)

I condemn today’s horrific terrorist attack in Paris. My thoughts and prayers are with the victims, their families, and the French people. This terrorist attack, like so many before it, is an assault on fundamental democratic principles that are essential to a free society. It is also a reminder that the war on terrorism is not over, that radical Islamic terrorist organizations have not been defeated, and that they continue to pose a threat at home and abroad. Whether it is ISIL in Iraq and Syria, the Taliban, Haqqani network, and al Qaeda in Afghanistan and Pakistan, Ansar al-Sharia and other terrorists in Libya, Boko Haram in Nigeria, or al Qaeda affiliated groups in Yemen, Somalia, and Mali, free and moderate societies face a growing and determined terrorist enemy. We ignore this gathering danger at our peril. We must recommit to our common efforts against these violent enemies and stand with our friends around the world. For their sake and for our own, we must prevail in this fight against violent extremism.

—Representative Kevin McCarthy

We want to express our deepest condolences to the families of the victims of terrorism in France, and our greatest respect for those whose lives were wantonly taken because they believed in the most important freedoms of all, thought and expression. We proudly stand shoulder to shoulder with citizens of our country’s oldest ally in defense of human dignity and the struggle to advance human rights.

—F. G.I. and family (Fairfax Station, VA)

I join in strongly condemning today’s disturbing terrorist attack in Paris — one of the great cites of the world. I want to express my condolences to the families of the newspaper staff and police officers who were killed. For years, the U.S. and France have had close cooperation in combating terrorism. In Europe, France is at the front lines of a dangerous and growing jihadist ideology that again demonstrated today that it knows no bounds. Sadly, this is not the first time terrorists have attacked this satirical newspaper for exercising free speech — a pillar of the civilized world. Today’s brutality is another crude reminder of the terrorist threat to all those living in free societies.

—Representative Ed Royce

Please allow me to extend my deepest sympathies to the families and friends of the victims, and to the French people on this terrible day. I admire the courage and the great hearts of the staff members of Charlie Hebdo who stood up for freedom of speech, and of the press, even as I grieve for their deaths. I hope that you and your fellow citizens can take some comfort knowing that myself and many others in America stand with the people of France on this dark day for liberty.

Vive la Republique! Vive la France!

—P.F. (Billings, MT)

Today’s terrorist attack on freedom of expression and freedom of speech in France is an attack on all of us, no matter what country we live in, who value such freedoms. My sympathies to the French people and to the families and friends of those at Charlie Hebdo who lost their lives.

—B.S. (Sacramento, CA)

I express my deep condolences for the people of the French Republic in the wake of the violent attack at Charlie Hebdo. These heinous incidents—which are beyond condemnation—are increasingly encouraged by violent extremists. The transatlantic community must remain strong and committed to the very values that are the targets of these murderers, whom I hope are brought to swift justice.

—Representative Bill Keating

My sincere condolences to Charlie Hebdo, to all those who suffered from this devastating attack, and to the French people for their courage and determination to be the standard bearer for the best values of an open society. All of us are members today of the Charlie Hebdo family, and all of us share both the pain and the inspiration that liberty brings.

—W.R.P. Former Deputy Chief of Mission, U.S. Embassy Paris

To the People of France:
I just wanted to express my condolences and those of my fellow Americans over the recent events in your country. I am moved and I am proud of the way your citizens have responded. Many times you take your friends for granted, and sometimes it takes a tragedy to remind you of that friendship. To hear how your countrymen honor the values of freedom of speech and their resolve to protect it, reminds me of the basis of that friendship.

—E. M.

I am the son of an Austrian who survived World War II in large part because he was granted refuge in France in 1938. In September of 1939 my father joined the Foreign Legion to defend France from the Nazis. Honorably discharged from the Legion in 1941 because of the Vichy accords, he left North Africa and sailed for the New World. He passed to his children his affection and respect for France. Along with the rest of the civilized world, all the descendants of that francophile Foreign Legionnaire, including his six great-grandchildren, stand with France in the aftermath of the attacks in Paris. Please accept my family’s most sincere sympathy and solidarity.

—O.J.R. Former Ambassador of the U.S. to Venezuela
On January 13, members of the New York City Police Department (NYPD) traveled to Paris to honor the three law enforcement officers who were killed in the line of duty during the recent terrorist attacks. President François Hollande, as well as hundreds of police officers, gathered to pay their respects to the families of the victims at the Prefecture de Police in Paris. The officers were posthumously awarded the highest decoration in France, the Légion d’honneur, for their service.

Representatives from the NYPD included members of the Intelligence, Patrol Services, Transit, and Community Affairs Bureaus, as well as the Ceremonial Unit. The delegation presented a letter of condolence from Police Commissioner William Bratton to the French National Police. Officers could pay their respects to the 17 victims of the terrorist attacks at a flower memorial located in proximity to the original shootings. Pierre-Edouard Colliex, Police and Homeland Security Attaché at the French Embassy in the U.S., was in attendance.

The NYPD’s Paris visit also facilitated the continued cooperation between the NYPD Intelligence Bureau and French law enforcement officials in their collaborative counterterrorism efforts.