

Congress of the United States
Washington, DC 20515

October 13, 2023

The Honorable Antony J. Blinken
Secretary
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken,

On Saturday, October 7, 2023, Hamas launched an unprecedented assault on Israel. To date, we know hundreds of civilians have been brutally murdered including at least 27 Americans.¹ We are also seeing women, children, and families being taken hostage by Hamas. As this disaster unfolds, our country must do all it can to rescue Americans in harm's way.

Our offices have received outreach from Minnesotans who are in Israel or who have loved ones in the country. Just as we experienced after the fall of Kabul and Russia's invasion of Ukraine, Americans are stranded abroad without clear guidance on how to leave. We are deeply concerned about our constituents who are still in Israel facing potential injury or death. Our offices are currently assisting Minnesotans who wish to evacuate and return home to the United States as quickly as possible.

Other countries, such as Poland, have extracted their citizens from Israel. Poland has used a combination of a government Boeing 737 and C-130H Hercules planes to evacuate its citizens, but Americans in Israel are still awaiting further guidance on the U.S. State Department's evacuation plan.² While we welcome the news that starting on October 13, 2023, the United States will offer charter flights to evacuate Americans, our constituents require additional information.³ We eagerly await the details of this proposal and further communication from your department on how U.S. citizens can access this service.

We are also greatly concerned regarding the lack of transparency on the number of Americans being held hostage, those who have been killed, or those attempting to return home. As of October 12, the National Security Council spokesman confirmed 27 U.S. citizens have been killed.¹ It is vital for Congress and families to have accurate and transparent information regarding the safety and well-being of Americans.

¹ Ravid, & Doherty. (2023, October 12). *27 Americans killed in Israel, others held hostage by Hamas in Gaza*. Axios. Retrieved October 13, 2023, from <https://www.axios.com/2023/10/08/hamas-attack-israel-americans-killed-hotages-gaza>

² Wądołowska. (2023, October 9). *First military flights evacuating Poles from Israel arrive in Warsaw*. Notes From Poland. Retrieved October 13, 2023, from <https://notesfrompoland.com/2023/10/09/first-military-flights-evacuating-poles-from-israel-arrive-in-warsaw/>

³ U.S. Department of State. (2023, October 12). *U.S. Government to Assist U.S. Citizens in Departing Israel* [Press release]. <https://www.state.gov/u-s-government-to-assist-u-s-citizens-in-departing-israel/>

As our offices continue working to ensure the safe return of our constituents, we respectfully request a response to the following questions:

- How many Americans are currently held hostage by the Hamas terrorists, and what is your plan to bring these hostages home? How many of these Americans are residents of the State of Minnesota?
- How many Minnesota residents are among the confirmed to be dead or missing?
- How many Americans are stranded in Israel and would like to find an avenue home? How many of these Americans are residents of the State of Minnesota?
- How will Americans receive information on the chartered flight program and how will you coordinate with congressional offices that are in communication with these individuals?
- If you are unable to provide transportation for Americans, what is the safest way for them to leave Israel?

Given the urgency of the situation, we urge you to respond as soon as possible and provide answers so we can assist our constituents and bring them home safely. Thank you for your prompt consideration of our questions.

Sincerely,



Tom Emmer
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Michelle Fischbach
Member of Congress



Brad Finstad
Member of Congress