

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

March 19, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary of State
U.S. Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Secretary Rubio:

We were shocked to learn this week that as the military conflict in Iran escalates and continues to threaten the safety of U.S. citizens in the Middle East, the State Department has abruptly and effectively ended emergency evacuations for Americans out of Israel. The State Department must take immediate steps to help Americans return home by:

1. Resuming charter flights.
2. Reopening the Department's Crisis Intake Form.
3. Activating the Department's Crisis Task Force to assist all Americans who wish to depart Israel.

Thousands of Americans, currently in Israel, are unable to access flights home and are not being offered alternative travel options or any additional assistance by the State Department. Additionally, the Department's inconsistent guidance and lack of responsiveness have added to uncertainty and fear, making the situation even more dire for impacted families.

As of this writing, the State Department has ceased providing charter flights or buses and instead has urged all Americans to exclusively rely on commercial transportation, or, in an emergency, the Israeli Ministry of Tourism. We are advised, however, that El Al does not have the capacity to offer enough flights to bring all constituents home and has now closed the emergency intake form that the Department directed citizens to use. This has left many Americans, including seniors, families with young children, and students, without real options. In addition, it has impacted many observant Jews who are unable to travel on the Sabbath. In the midst of a conflict, U.S. citizens should not have to wait weeks to be able to board a commercial flight or cross the Israeli border into another country to find their way home. It is unacceptable for the State Department to leave them on their own.

In addition, the State Department has inexplicably closed its own Crisis Intake Form, which thousands of Americans have relied on in the last few weeks to receive timely information and coordinate emergency assistance and evacuation. While the State Department directed constituents to register to fly with El Al, the airline has also since closed its form. Our offices would be glad to provide you with contact information for thousands of constituents who are currently seeking to return home from Israel. As Israel continues to face threats from hostilities with Iran, the State Department cannot abandon American citizens abroad. Failing to assist Americans in their time of need is totally unacceptable.

We urge the State Department to prioritize the safety and security of Americans through the following actions:

1. Develop and detail a plan to restart charter flights from Israel and other countries in the region where U.S. citizens are seeking safety immediately.

2. Re-open the State Department's Crisis Intake form to receive new entries.
3. Provide clear guidance for U.S. citizens who choose to return to the United States through commercial air travel.

The resources and guidance being provided to our constituents are causing frustration, anxiety, and fear. The State Department must do much more to bring Americans home from Israel safely and as soon as possible.

Sincerely,



Laura A. Gillen
Member of Congress



Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



Thomas R. Suozzi
Member of Congress



Ritchie Torres
Member of Congress



George Latimer
Member of Congress



Yvette D. Clarke
Member of Congress



Josh Gottheimer
Member of Congress



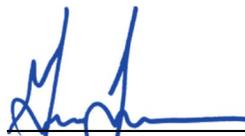
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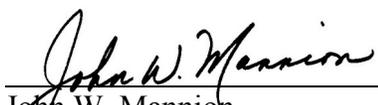
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