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October 11, 2023

The Honorable Antony Blinken
Secretary of State
US Department of State
2201 C St. NW
Washington, DC 20520

Dear Secretary Blinken:

I write with concern over the security situation in Israel and the safety of American citizens still in the region. Following the barbaric terrorist attacks on Israel by Hamas, my office has received multiple reports of Missourians in Israel who are seeking to leave the region but are struggling to find transportation out of the country. With the growing number of commercial airlines cancelling flights out of Israel, I urge you to consider additional U.S. government-facilitated transport options for Americans attempting to return home.

The Bureau of Consular Affairs informed my office yesterday that the State Department currently “is not involved with airlifts, an evacuation, or assisted departure of U.S. citizens.” Today, your office informed mine that the State Department “continue[s] to encourage U.S. citizens to look at the available commercial options to depart Israel.” While I appreciate the initial information provided on Sunday to help my constituents contact the U.S. Embassy, this is no longer sufficient. New clarity about travel assistance is urgently required. I urge you to work with your counterparts across federal agencies to bring to bear all available resources and authorities, including charter flights, to assist Americans that remain in Israel with returning home to their families.

On behalf of my constituents who remain in the region, I request the answers to the following questions from your office as soon as possible.

1. Is the State Department actively planning to provide additional travel assistance to Americans in Israel?
2. Is the Department or any other U.S. agencies planning to conduct airlifts or equivalent government-facilitated transportation to help Americans in the region return home?
3. If plans have been made, how will the State Department communicate those travel options?
4. When can Americans expect information on how to return home? When can we expect decisions about transportation options to be made?

I look forward to a timely response from your office. And thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,



Josh Hawley
United States Senator