



STATE OF MICHIGAN
OFFICE OF THE GOVERNOR
LANSING

GRETCHEN WHITMER
GOVERNOR

GARLIN GILCHRIST II
LT. GOVERNOR

October 31, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

Undoubtedly, the highest priority of the U.S. Department of State is to ensure the security and safety of Americans overseas. This mission is of the greatest importance when U.S. citizens are caught in conflicts beyond our borders and beyond their control. With a worsening crisis occurring in the Gaza Strip, there are Michiganders in Gaza who are unable to leave, and their families are terrified. I'm writing today with utmost urgency to call on you to help bring them home safely.

In Michigan, we have so many families who are feeling the trauma and mourning the loss of innocent lives, and they are increasingly concerned about civilians in the Gaza Strip that are need of humanitarian aid. Since the crisis began, my office and many within the Michigan Congressional Delegation have heard from concerned families and friends who are worried about those they may know who now, innocently, find themselves in harm's way. It is important that we all work together to get Michiganders to safety and back with their families. I know you and the men and women of the State Department are committed to the agency's mission, and I believe the sharing of information is foundational to the secure the safe return of our American citizens in Gaza. Without jeopardizing security and the innocent lives at stake, I request confirmation from the State Department on the following:

- It has been reported that roughly 600 Americans are in Gaza and are having extreme difficulty leaving. Does the State Department have a good accounting of who these individuals are and where they are in Gaza? Can you tell me how many of these individuals are from Michigan and/or claim ties to the state due to familial relations? Is the Department engaged on specific cases from those from Michigan?
- Are you aware of any American casualties in Gaza?
- With reported Internet outages occurring, beyond providing travel and departure possibility updates online via the department's website, how else are foreign service and consular staff able to reach Americans trapped in Gaza and who wish to leave the conflict?
- Since October 13, the U.S. has arranged charter flights for U.S. citizens and their immediate family members who have been unable to book commercial transit and seek a safe means of departing Israel. Understanding that the U.S.' access to Gaza is different, what strategies is



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the State Department planning to employ to secure the evacuation of Americans and their immediate family members from Gaza?

As your department continues to engage with leaders abroad during this time of crisis, I look forward to working with you as we prioritize the safe return of all Americans in the region to their friends and families.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gretchen Whitmer".

Gretchen Whitmer
Governor of Michigan