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Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515-3217

October 8, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write today to express my serious concerns for and inquire about the status of my constituents who remain in Israel at the height of a declared war following the terrorist attack perpetrated by Hamas.

It has been shocking to see the horrific violence against thousands of innocents by these terrorist forces. As this unprecedented and unprovoked attack against Israel has come during what would normally be a joyous time celebrating Sukkot and Simchat Torah, there are thousands of constituents and other American citizens in Israel at this time. Additionally, there are increasing reports of American casualties and hostages being taken.

While we must work to ensure that Israel has all of the weaponry and equipment needed to defend itself, we must also address the situation that our own citizens find themselves in at the moment as well. As casualties continue to rise into the thousands, Americans are fearing for their lives and searching for ways to return to the United States. However, flights are being canceled and airlines are suspending operations in the region, stranding thousands without a way home.

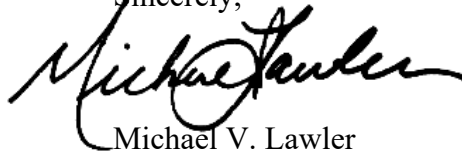
Although I acknowledge and appreciate the efforts the State Department is taking in this fluid and tragic situation, we need to know what steps are and will be taken to address the situation at hand. Therefore, I respectfully request answers to the following questions:

1. What is the State Department's best current estimate of how many American citizens, American lawful permanent residents (LPRs), and locally employed staff remain in Israel?
2. What, if any, outreach is being done to contact these individuals?

3. How many American citizens and LPRs does the State Department estimate are being held hostage by hostile parties?
4. Can you confirm that the State Department is not planning to evacuate U.S. citizens at this time?
5. What is the State Department's plan to help ensure the safe departure of all these individuals who cannot return to the United States at the moment? What is the State Department's plan to ensure the safety of all these individuals while they remain in Israel?

Thank you for your prompt attention to this matter. I look forward to your urgent response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Michael Lawler". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, prominent initial "M".

Michael V. Lawler
Member of Congress