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October 10, 2023

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

Dear Secretary Blinken,

I write to urge the State Department to begin coordinating evacuation flights out of Israel for American citizens who want to return home to the United States. I appreciate the State Department's tireless work since the start of Hamas' attack on Israel, however, as this conflict continues, we must work to get all Americans who wish to depart out of country. My concern for New Yorkers stranded in Israel grows by the day.

I am grateful for everything the Biden Administration has already done to support Israel and support Americans in country. This includes the transfer of defense articles, intelligence sharing, our updated regional defense posture, and the State Department's work to identify American civilians in Israel. However, my office has been contacted by dozens of constituents whose loved ones have been unable to secure travel back home to the United States. And while Ben Gurion International Airport currently remains open, my understanding is that US carriers have halted flights to Israel and regional carriers are offering limited options with an increasing number of cancellations. For those of my constituents who are able to find available regional flights, many are sharing that the cost of the ticket is prohibitive.

Given this, I urge the State Department to begin coordinating charter flights out of Israel for American citizens. This may be possible or made easier through coordination with European allies that face the same situation. If charter flights are not possible, I urge you to work with Secretary Lloyd Austin to secure military flights for American citizens and I stand ready to work with the State Department to reprogram funds or draft supplemental appropriations to establish a fund to allow for and expedite American citizens' ability to transfer to the more expensive regional flights.

Thank you for your consideration of these requests, for your steadfast support of Israel, and your constant work on behalf of American citizens in conflict zones.

Sincerely,



Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator