United States Senate
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

September 29, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write with grave concern regarding the State Department's recent suspension of all visitor visas for eligible, vetted individuals from Gaza, including those in need of urgent medical care. We are also concerned by the unprecedented decision to abruptly refuse nonimmigrant visas to people with Palestinian passports. It is critical that the Department immediately reinstate temporary medical and humanitarian visas for Palestinian civilians in Gaza in order to save lives, resume nonimmigrant visas for eligible Palestinian passport holders, and double down on the work needed to achieve a just and lasting peace in the region.

During the Biden and current Trump administrations, individuals from Gaza who met specific criteria set by the State Department have been granted temporary medical and humanitarian visas, allowing them to access life-saving medical treatment in the United States. These civilians include severely wounded children who are especially vulnerable and, through no fault of their own, have been caught in the crossfire and forced to endure horrible impacts from the war in Gaza. These children and their accompanying caretakers leaving Gaza to receive medical treatment are subject to strong vetting processes, including by the Israeli government, which look specifically at any potential security threats and known associations. Despite this rigorous vetting and extreme need for lifesaving treatment, on August 16, the State Department announced that "all visitor visas for individuals from Gaza are being stopped" pending a "review of the processes and procedures used to issue a small number of temporary medical-humanitarian visas in recent days."[1] We are deeply concerned that this blanket decision prevents a viable pathway to critical care for individuals who qualify for temporary medical and humanitarian visas, including children with life-threatening injuries or conditions, worsening an already dire humanitarian crisis.

Access to functioning medical facilities in Gaza has grown increasingly limited, and acute shortages of medicines, medical supplies, and medical professionals, particularly those with expertise in complex specialties, delays care and exacerbates the suffering of those in need. Doctors Without Borders/Médecins Sans Frontières (MSF) has reported that emergency rooms have been "overcrowded" and health facilities are running over capacity.[2] The State

[1] @StateDept. (2025, August 16). "All visitor visas for individuals from Gaza are being stopped while we conduct a full and thorough review of the process and procedures used to issue a small number of temporary medical-humanitarian visas in recent days." [X post]. Retrieved from https://x.com/StateDept/status/1956717342693458359

[2] Mughaiseb, M. (2025, August 13). *Medicine is being strangled.* Doctors Without Borders. https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/latest/medicine-being-strangled-msf-doctor-collapse-gazas-health-system

Department's decision to indefinitely pause the visa process places eligible and vulnerable civilians in a life-threatening position of further uncertainty, likely causing preventable deaths. Therefore, we request a full explanation of the circumstances leading to this abrupt decision, including any specific issues, instances, or concerns identified, and a list of any cases of medical treatments that have been delayed as a result. Further, we request information on what specific processes and procedures are being reviewed, the criteria being used to review them, when you expect the reviews to be completed, and how the Department plans to ensure that access to emergency medical care for those eligible is not disrupted going forward.

More recently, the State Department made another broad decision to refuse nonimmigrant visas for individuals who would otherwise be eligible but hold passports issued by the Palestinian Authority, using a mechanism that is usually applied narrowly in specific circumstances where further documentation is required from a visa applicant.[3] Those receiving nonimmigrant visas also go through a vetting process and often travel to the U.S. for university studies, business, and visits with family and friends. The State Department has not communicated the reasoning behind the abrupt change in procedure nor a timeframe for lifting this categorical visa restriction. As a result, we also request a full explanation of the circumstances leading to the suspension of nonimmigrant visas for people with Palestinian passports, including any specific issues or concerns identified and how they are being addressed, and when the Department plans to resume processing and approving these visas.

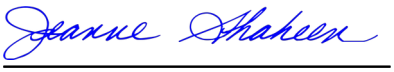
As Secretary of State, we urge you to immediately reinstate the issuance of temporary medical and humanitarian visas in order to provide urgently needed life-saving civilian relief, resume issuing nonimmigrant visas for eligible individuals with Palestinian passports, and refocus U.S. efforts on achieving a lasting end to the conflict in Gaza that ensures security, peace, and prosperity for all in the region.

Sincerely,

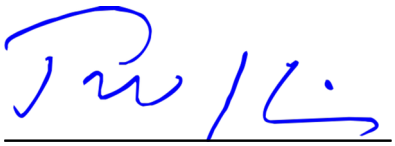
Cory A. Booker
United States Senator

Charles E. Schumer
United States Senator

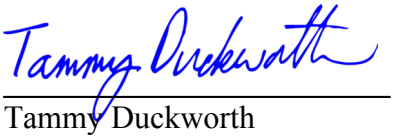
[3] Wong, E., Rasgon, A., Odenheimer, N., Aleaziz, H. (2025, August 31) "U.S. Suspends Visas for Palestinian Passport Holders, Officials Say." *New York Times.* https://www.nytimes.com/2025/08/31/world/middleeast/us-palestinian-visa-suspensions.html



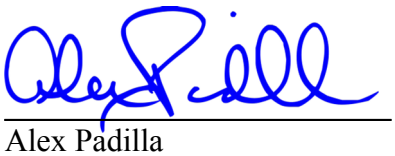
Jeanne Shaheen
United States Senator



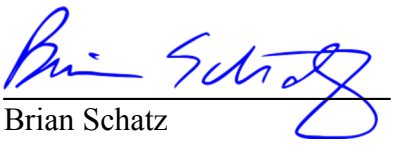
Tim Kaine
United States Senator



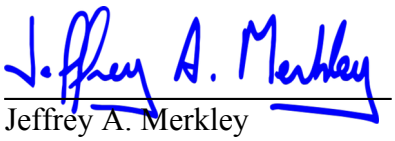
Tammy Duckworth
United States Senator



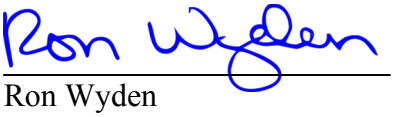
Alex Padilla
United States Senator



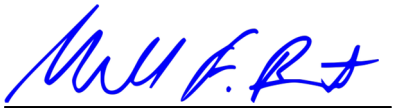
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator

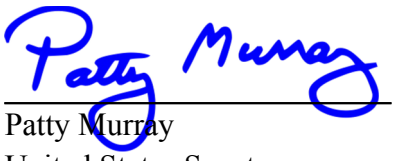


Ron Wyden
United States Senator



Michael F. Bennet
United States Senator

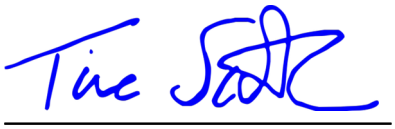
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



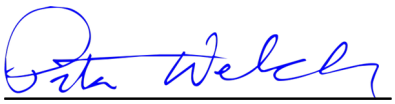
Patty Murray
United States Senator

Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator

Kirsten Gillibrand
United States Senator

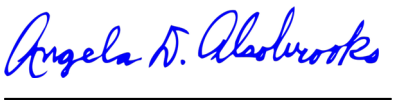


Tina Smith
United States Senator



Peter Welch
United States Senator

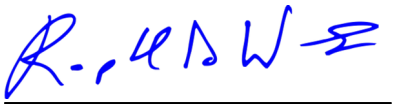
Mark R. Warner
United States Senator



Angela D. Alsobrooks
United States Senator

Jacky Rosen
United States Senator

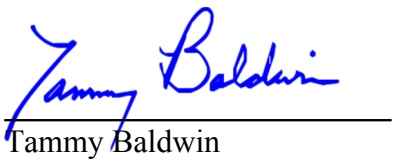
Richard J. Durbin
United States Senator



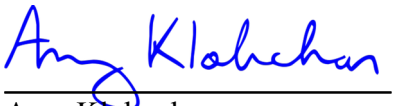
Raphael Warnock
United States Senator

John Hickenlooper
United States Senator

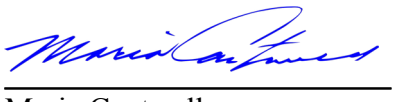
Jack Reed
United States Senator



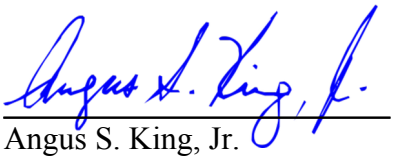
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Amy Klobuchar
United States Senator

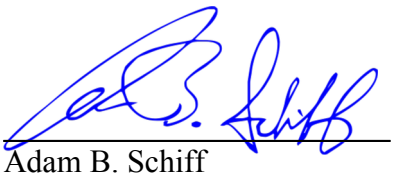


Maria Cantwell
United States Senator

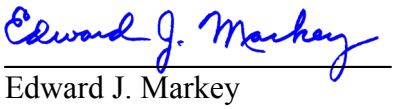


Angus S. King, Jr.
United States Senator

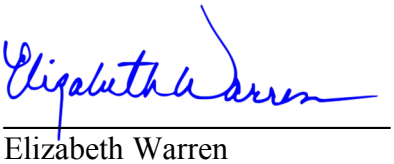
Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Adam B. Schiff
United States Senator



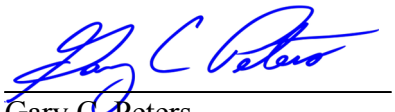
Edward J. Markey
United States Senator



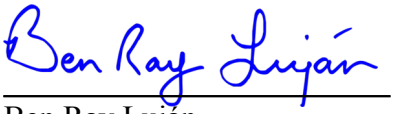
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator

Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator

Martin Heinrich
United States Senator

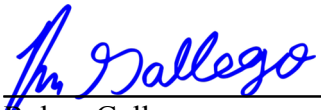


Gary C. Peters
United States Senator

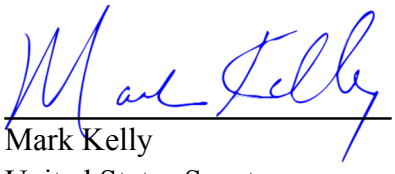


Ben Ray Luján
United States Senator

Margaret Wood Hassan
United States Senator



Ruben Gallego
United States Senator



Mark Kelly
United States Senator

Andy Kim
United States Senator

Lisa Blunt Rochester
United States Senator

Richard Blumenthal
United States Senator

Elissa Slotkin
United States Senator