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July 18, 2025

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
U.S Department of State
2201 C Street N.W
Washington, DC 20451

Dear Secretary Rubio,

I am writing to express my deep concern regarding the strike on the last Catholic church in Gaza, by the Israeli military, which occurred yesterday. This strike killed civilian Najwa Abu Daoud and led to the deaths of civilians Saad Salameh and Fumayya Ayyad. It also injured Father Gabriel Romanelli, who is the parish priest, who received daily calls from the late Pope Francis until he died. Incidents like this raise urgent and serious questions about the protection of places of worship in conflict zones, the role and effectiveness of humanitarian aid, and the pressing need to pursue a ceasefire to prevent further harm to civilians.

This tragedy again reminds us of the dire need for humanitarian aid in Gaza. It is reported that Saad Salameh and Fumayya Ayyad, who initially survived the strike, succumbed to their injuries at Al-Mamadani hospital. I am concerned deaths like these are being exacerbated by a lack of medical resources and blood units. In the last few months, little to no aid has entered the region due to Israel's blockade. A ceasefire is critical not only to protect innocent lives but also to enable unimpeded humanitarian access and pave the way for long-term peace efforts in the region.

In light of these developments, I request information on how the State Department is taking action to prevent places of worship from being targeted. Additionally, it is essential to clarify how the United States is monitoring and ensuring that military equipment supplied by the U.S. is not being used in ways that violate international humanitarian law, especially with regard to attacks on civilian or religious locations. Transparency and accountability in this regard are vital to upholding human rights and international norms.

The escalating violence and devastating impact on civilians and sacred sites make it imperative to pursue diplomatic avenues for a sustainable ceasefire. We request answers to the following questions within 30 days of receipt of this letter:

1. What has the State Department done to increase the flow of medical supplies within the Gaza Strip?
2. What is the U.S doing to prevent civilian casualties and strikes on places of worship?
3. Is there a discussion between the U.S and the Israeli government on protecting places of worship within the Gaza Strip?
4. What is the administration doing to ensure U.S military aid to Israel is not being used to against civilians and places of worship, like the Holy Family Church?
5. What initiatives is the United States undertaking to advocate for an immediate and lasting cessation of hostilities?

The protection of civilian life and religious freedom and the effective delivery of humanitarian aid are foundational values that must guide U.S. foreign policy in this crisis. I look forward to a prompt response explaining how the State Department is addressing these urgent matters with the seriousness and compassion they demand to prevent further tragedy and deaths.

Thank you for your attention to this important matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Debbie Dingell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Debbie Dingell
Member of Congress