

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 4, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Rubio,

I write with deep concern regarding the Department of State's abdication of its responsibilities to protect U.S. citizens in the Middle East amid the administration's initiation of hostilities with the Islamic Republic of Iran. Recent developments in the region have exposed a disturbing dissonance between the Department's public exhortations that Americans leave the region and complete lack of assistance available to U.S. nationals to effectuate their departure from the region.

Three days after beginning strikes on Iran, the State Department has issued an urgent advisory directing American citizens to "*depart now*" from more than a dozen countries across the Middle East, citing "serious safety risks" and urging them to use available commercial transportation to leave the region.<sup>1</sup> This broad advisory, encompassing countries across the entire region, was issued even as commercial airspace in much of the region has been closed and flights have been widely canceled, severely constraining the ability of U.S. citizens to follow that guidance.<sup>2</sup>

Since issuing that warning to evacuate, reports indicate that U.S. embassies in several countries have been damaged, closed, or evacuated, and are not in a position to provide meaningful evacuation assistance, leaving many U.S. citizens effectively stranded.<sup>3</sup> The U.S. Ambassador to Israel reportedly stated that the Embassy is *not* in a position to evacuate or directly assist Americans in leaving the country, effectively acknowledging that the Department is powerless to

---

<sup>1</sup> Elizabeth Hagedorn, *State Department Urges Americans in Middle East to Leave Immediately*, AL-MONITOR (Mar. 2, 2026), <https://www.al-monitor.com/originals/2026/03/state-department-urges-americans-middle-east-leave-immediately> (last visited Mar. 3, 2026).

<sup>2</sup> Anna Betts, *Many Americans Stranded in Middle East after US Advisory to Depart Immediately*, THE GUARDIAN (Mar. 3, 2026), <https://www.theguardian.com/us-news/2026/mar/03/americans-stranded-middle-east-iran-strike> (last visited Mar. 3, 2026).

<sup>3</sup> *Americans in Limbo as War Leads US to Draw Down in Mideast*, AP NEWS (Mar. 3, 2026), <https://apnews.com/article/embassies-iran-state-department-strikes-travel-1ce7865cb17bf201025aab98a17afb74> (last visited Mar. 3, 2026).

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

help Americans return home.<sup>4</sup> At the same time, reports have surfaced of the White House evacuating Trump-aligned social media influencers, their entourages, and lobbyists from the region on private jets, suggesting the administration is perfectly capable of protecting those with means and connections to the White House, while leaving the remaining population of Americans stranded abroad to fend for themselves.<sup>5</sup>

Issuing a blanket advisory while providing no concrete evacuation options is unacceptable. The U.S. government's first obligation is to protect the lives and safety of its citizens, especially when its own foreign policy and military decisions materially increase the risks those citizens face. The Administration's failure to execute (or even develop) a coherent plan for evacuating Americans from the conflict zone is tantamount to abandonment, particularly in the case of hostilities with an adversary notorious for targeting Americans abroad.

In light of these developments, I request that the Department provide Congress with the following, no later than March 10:

1. A detailed account of all planning and preparation the Department had undertaken prior to the issuance of the March 2 "depart now" advisory for facilitating evacuation of U.S. citizens across the Middle East.
2. An assessment of the logistical options currently available to evacuate U.S. citizens from affected countries, including commercial charter arrangements, military airlift options, and coordination with allied governments.
3. A description of how U.S. embassies and consulates are currently resourced and tasked to assist Americans in crisis, including any additional personnel or funding deployed in response to the current crisis.
4. An explanation of why the Department determined that issuing a broad departure advisory, rather than orchestrating evacuation assistance, was the appropriate course of action.
5. Copies of internal communications, risk assessments, and legal opinions regarding the Department's responsibilities to U.S. citizens abroad under current conditions.

---

<sup>4</sup> Sarah Lynch Baldwin, *Americans Urged to Leave 14 Middle East Countries amid Iran War*, YAHOO NEWS (Mar. 3, 2026), <https://www.yahoo.com/news/articles/americans-urged-leave-14-middle-125544444.html> (last visited Mar. 3, 2026).

<sup>5</sup> Shelagh Fogarty, *White House evacuates Trump adviser and TikTok star aboard private jet - as Americans remain stranded in Middle East*, LBC (Mar. 4, 2026), [https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/jet-evacuate-trump-dog-walker-5HjdTpZ\\_2/](https://www.lbc.co.uk/article/jet-evacuate-trump-dog-walker-5HjdTpZ_2/) (last visited Mar. 4, 2026).

United States Senate  
WASHINGTON, DC 20510

Advising Americans to “*depart now*” without a credible plan to help them do so puts American lives at risk, and raises serious questions about the Department’s preparedness, risk assessment processes, and prioritization of citizen safety. These risks only increase with each passing day that the war with Iran continues.

I look forward to your prompt and thorough response.

Sincerely,



---

Ruben Gallego  
United States Senator