

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

May 4, 2026

Admiral Brad Cooper
Commander
U.S. Central Command
7115 South Boundary Boulevard
MacDill AFB, FL 33621

Dear Admiral Cooper,

Israeli officials have asserted that U.S. and Israeli forces are coordinating on targeting actions in the current conflict in the Middle East.¹ Yet Israel's practice of unilaterally declared mass evacuation orders in Lebanon and Iran likely contravene international laws the United States has helped develop around humane warfare.

The Israeli practice of military exclusion or evacuation zones in Gaza, Lebanon, and Iran presents major risks of violating international law and has been linked to the deaths of thousands of civilians.^{2,3} The declaration of military evacuation zones has been used to permanently displace people and destroy homes and towns—acts that are in violation of international law. Furthermore, no declaration of evacuation zones or “kill zones” absolves Israeli and U.S. forces from the absolute legal responsibility to determine that each individual person or civilian facility targeted by drones, jets, and gunfire is, in fact, a military target.

In Southern Lebanon, hundreds of civilians have already been killed in areas under Israeli evacuation orders. For example, Father Pierre al-Rahi, a leader in the Christian village of Qlayaa, was killed by Israeli tank fire just days after he announced the people of the village would not leave their homes.⁴ Across Lebanon, more than a million people—at least a sixth of the population—have been forced to flee their homes under mass evacuation and bombing threats.⁵ The Israeli Defense Minister has ordered his forces to destroy the homes of hundreds of Lebanese communities and hinted at a long-term or permanent displacement of up to a million people.⁶

¹ Hudson, Strobel, and Hendrix, *U.S.-Israeli rift widens over potential endgame in Iran*, The Washington Post (March 20, 2026) (online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2026/03/20/us-israel-iran-goals-trump-netanyahu/>)

² Anouti and Tawil, *In a southern Lebanese city emptied by Israel's offensive, some vow to stay put*, The Associated Press (March 26, 2026) (online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/03/26/lebanon-tyre-hezbollah-israel-iran-war/732d6794-293d-11f1-a0f2-3ba4c9fe08ac_story.html)

³ Live coverage, *28 health-care workers killed in Lebanon in past day, WHO says, as scope of Israeli invasion widens*, The Washington Post (October 3, 2024) (online at <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2024/10/03/israel-attack-lebanon-hezbollah-war-news-gaza/>)

⁴ Nabih Bulos, *A priest's death in Lebanon brings war to a community that tried to avoid it*, Los Angeles Times (March 11, 2026) (online at <https://www.latimes.com/world-nation/story/2026-03-11/priests-death-in-lebanon-brings-war-to-community-that-wanted-peace>)

⁵ Chehayeb and Harb, *War has already displaced nearly a million Lebanese, and aid groups warn of a humanitarian crisis*, The Associated Press (March 14, 2026) (online at https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2026/03/14/lebanon-israel-hezbollah-displacement-shelter/59deab16-1f6c-11f1-a29c-fd43da9a479a_story.html)

⁶ Steven Scheer, *Israel to destroy 'all houses' near Lebanon border, defence minister says*, Reuters (March 31, 2026) (online at <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/israel-destroy-all-houses-near-lebanon-border-defence-minister-says-2026-03-31/>)

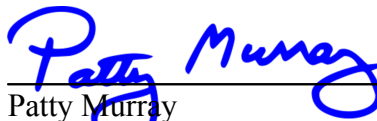
With respect for the sacrifices of the uniformed personnel under your command, and equal respect for the principles and values to which they are bound by law, we request answers to the following questions by May 20, 2026:

1. Do U.S. forces under your command coordinate military targets with Israeli forces as part of Operation Epic Fury?
2. Have forces under your command provided refueling services, intelligence, or other assistance for Israeli imposition of evacuation zones in Lebanon and/or Iran?
3. Have you received any intelligence assessments or analyses on the military utility of Israel's mass evacuation zones in Lebanon and/or Iran?
4. Have you signed off on U.S. military support to the establishment, enforcement, or targeting of any persons or infrastructure in evacuation zones?
5. Have any personnel under your command raised any concerns or provided any legal analysis on Israeli unilateral designation of evacuation zones or targeting decisions in such zones to you, anyone in your chain of command, the Office of the Staff Judge Advocate, CENTCOM or DOD's Office of Inspector General, or DOD's Office of the General Counsel? If so, provide a copy of any such reports or communications to the Judiciary, Intelligence, Armed Services, and Foreign Relations/Affairs committees.
6. Have any personnel under your command shared intelligence with the Israeli government that could be used to support the creation, enforcement, or targeting of evacuation zones in Lebanon and/or Iran? Has anyone under your command analyzed whether such sharing would violate the terms of any intelligence sharing agreements with regards to the use of any U.S.-provided intelligence in operations that might violate international law, U.S. law, and the laws of armed conflict?

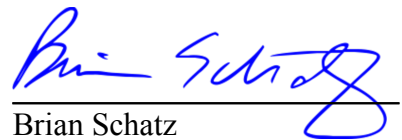
Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Patty Murray
United States Senator



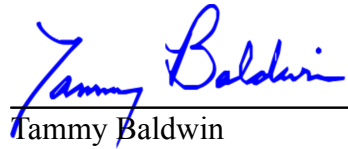
Brian Schatz
United States Senator



Martin Heinrich
United States Senator



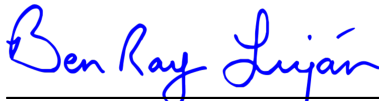
Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



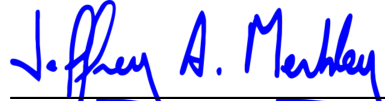
Tammy Baldwin
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Christopher A. Coons
United States Senator



Tim Kaine
United States Senator