

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 20, 2026

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

The Honorable Mike Huckabee
U.S. Ambassador to Israel
U.S. Embassy Jerusalem
14 David Flusser
Jerusalem 9378322

Dear Secretary Rubio and Ambassador Huckabee,

We write with grave concern regarding Abdalkareem Issa Ahmed Safi, an 18-year-old U.S. citizen and high school student, currently detained at Israel's notorious Ofer prison. Abdalkareem was taken into custody by Israeli forces around 3 a.m. on June 29, 2026, from his family home in Jalazone, located about 4 miles north of Ramallah in the occupied West Bank. He was detained just days before his 18th birthday and while he was in the middle of completing his general secondary education certificate (Tawjihi) exams.

On July 2, 2026, Israeli authorities issued an administrative detention order against Abdalkareem based on secret information not disclosed to his lawyer. Administrative detention is a procedure used by Israeli authorities in the Israeli military courts whereby Palestinian detainees are held without charge or trial and without a plan to bring them to trial. Abdalkareem's administrative detention order expires on October 28, 2026, but can be renewed indefinitely.

Abdalkareem's arbitrary detention without due process is a violation of internationally recognized human rights. Ofer prison is the same facility where another American citizen, Mohammed Ibrahim, was previously held as a minor. While in detention he lost over a third of his body weight and contracted multiple illnesses, including scabies.

On July 23, 2026, a congressional request was made to U.S. Consular Services for multi-vitamins and prophylactic scabies medication for Abdalkareem. On July 31, 2026, his father, Issa Safi, made a similar request. On September 23, 2026, we learned that Abdelkareem has now contracted scabies while in custody.

Since Abdalkareem's detention, his father has repeatedly sought consular assistance and basic information about his son's welfare. On July 5, 2026, he contacted the U.S. Embassy's American Citizen Services, requesting immediate intervention. We understand that Embassy staff spoke with him the same day and, in a July 8, 2026, email, indicated that they had requested permission to visit Abdalkareem and were seeking information from Israeli authorities. Yet no further updates were provided until Issa followed up on July 21, 2026, expressing urgent concern about deteriorating health conditions inside Ofer prison, including widespread malnutrition and scabies outbreaks, which he feared would put his son at serious risk. After that inquiry Embassy staff confirmed that a visit had been scheduled.

On July 24, 2026, the Bureau of Consular Affairs responded to a congressional inquiry that the Department "will provide all appropriate consular services" to Abdalkareem, including "necessary medication or medical attention, working to ensure detained U.S. citizens receive fair and transparent treatment, including access to legal counsel, and facilitating authorized communication with their family or others."

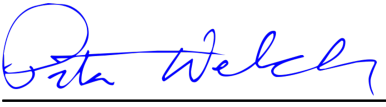
We understand that Embassy staff visited Abdalkareem at Ofer prison on July 23, 2026. During the visit, Abdalkareem reported being beaten during interrogation and expressed concern about missing his exams, which determine placement in university for Palestinian students. Further, he has been denied communication with his family and has had limited access to legal counsel.

We understand that the Embassy requested information from the Israeli authorities about whether Abdalkareem had been examined by medical staff upon his arrival and whether he was allowed access to the books required for his exams. In recent communications, Embassy officials informed the family that they have requested another visit, but that it would likely not occur until November.

The State Department has repeatedly claimed that it "has no higher priority than the safety and security of U.S. citizens abroad." We share that view and urge you to match rhetoric with action by engaging the Israeli government directly to secure Abdalkareem's immediate release and ensure his administrative detention order is not renewed. We further request that you inform the relevant Israeli authorities that detaining an American citizen in an Israeli military prison, without being informed of the allegations against him and without any opportunity to contest his detention, is a violation of international law and unacceptable conduct by a close ally of the United States.

Given the worrisome conditions of Abdalkareem's arbitrary detention, we urgently request a response no later than November 6, 2026.

Sincerely,



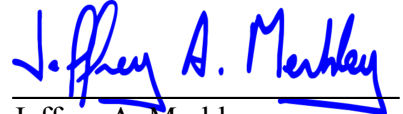
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United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



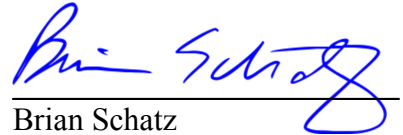
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United States Senator



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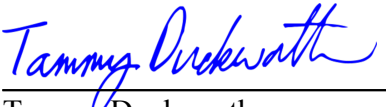
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Angela D. Alsobrooks
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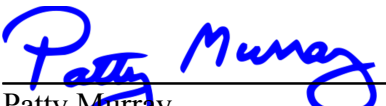
Andy Kim
United States Senator



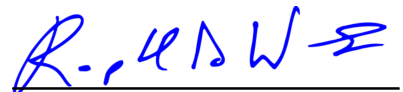
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