

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

October 20, 2025

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

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write to request that you use all diplomatic and operational tools to assist Palestinians in Gaza seeking United States visa services under the recent and fragile ceasefire conditions. As you know, the United States requires in-person interviews and biometric collection for most visa categories, yet despite the ceasefire, it's unclear whether Gaza residents can reach the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem or consular posts elsewhere due to restrictions on their ability to leave Gaza. We ask that you take increased measures to facilitate visa processing and enable the required in-person interviews for Palestinians.

Despite the Department's efforts, the reality is that many visa applicants, including family members of U.S. citizens and individuals with urgent humanitarian or medical cases, are unable to leave Gaza. Currently, it is unclear whether border crossings are open for civilians to exit, or if there are any vetting or security conditions in place for them to leave. For example, it appears that the Rafah crossing on the border with Egypt could reopen, but only at a date determined by Israel.¹ The absence of a meaningful and viable process for obtaining visa interviews is undermining the integrity of our visa system, and inflicting further hardship on people who are otherwise following lawful procedures.

We ask that the State Department take steps to expedite the review process for Palestinian visas, with a focus on reducing backlog and logistical barriers. This could include measures such as deploying more consular officers dedicated to Gaza-origin cases, or publishing clear deadlines for the review process. We also request that you work with the Israeli government to permit Palestinians with scheduled visa appointments to have limited access to leave Gaza for their interviews, and explore transportation and coordination mechanisms to ensure applicants can safely access consular posts.

Additionally, we ask that the State Department provide clear guidance to applicants and humanitarian organizations about the steps being taken to secure access for these cases. The United States has long affirmed that access to fair and efficient visa processing is a matter of both rule of law and human dignity. We request that you establish a strategy to secure exit permits, facilitate interviews, and ultimately provide a feasible visa review process to properly vet Palestinian applicants from Gaza.

¹ Emanuel Fabian, "Rafah Crossing won't open today, contrary to reports, security official tells Tol," Times of Israel, 15 October 2025

We applaud the strenuous work that occurred to make this historic ceasefire happen, though we understand the work doesn't stop here. Thank you for your attention to this pressing issue and we look forward to working with you to safely and securely reunite Palestinians with their loved ones.

Sincerely,



Jimmy Panetta
Member of Congress



Bradley Scott Schneider
Member of Congress



Dan Goldman
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress