October 8, 2026

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

The Honorable Pamela Bondi
Attorney General
U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20530

cc: Ambassador Mike Huckabee, U.S. Embassy Jerusalem; Kash Patel, Director, Federal Bureau of Investigation; Bureau of Consular Affairs, U.S. Department of State; U.S. Congressman Trent Kelly; U.S. Senator Roger Wicker; U.S. Senator Cindy Hyde-Smith

Re: Attacks by Israeli settlers and soldiers on U.S. citizens in the occupied West Bank; request for federal investigations, consular protection, Leahy Law determinations and sanctions

Dear Secretary Rubio and Attorney General Bondi,

We write on behalf of Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN) and the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) to request urgent action regarding Israeli settler violence against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. In particular, we call on the Department of Justice and the FBI to open criminal investigations into attacks by Israeli settlers on U.S. citizens in the occupied West Bank; and on the Department of State to provide full protection of American

citizenship to the U.S. citizens harmed by settler violence. We also ask the State Department to comply with the Leahy Law by prohibiting military assistance for Israeli unites determined to be facilitating settler violence. We write in particular about Samid Khdair, a 56-year-old U.S. citizen from Mississippi who was beaten and robbed by settlers on September 4, 2026, while Israeli soldiers looked on, who was left with eye injuries that may be permanent, and who has received from his government only a single phone call and an offer of a replacement travel document.

Mr. Khdair told DAWN and ADC that on the afternoon of September 4 he was driving with his brother, when about 20 settlers armed with clubs, stones and pistols stopped the car at the entrance of their village of al-Mughayyir, northeast of Ramallah, doused the brothers with pepper spray and pelted them with rocks. The brothers fled into an olive grove, from which Mr. Khdair could see Israeli soldiers standing with the settlers beside his car. A second group, armed with pistols and clubs and speaking Hebrew, found them under an olive tree, and one of them took Mr. Khdair's U.S. passport and spat on it. The group then beat both men with clubs until the clubs broke, and then with rocks. Soldiers fired tear gas at villagers who came to help. A video filmed from a nearby rooftop, verified by DAWN and ADC, shows villagers helping the bleeding brothers into a car while Israeli soldiers stand in the olive grove a short distance away, pointing their weapons at the group as it waited for the ambulance. Settlers on the same road attacked the ambulance carrying the brothers to a Ramallah hospital. Mr. Khdair required 14 stitches to his forehead and leg. An ophthalmologist's report reviewed by DAWN and ADC confirms trauma to his right eye, including damage to the eyelid and scarring of the cornea, and reduced vision in that eye that may be permanent. His brother, who has a kidney condition that has him on dialysis, struggled to breathe after the attack. Settlers stole his car, phone, U.S. passport, driver's license, Social Security card, watch and cash. The Times of Israel and Al Jazeera reported the attack the following day.

Mr. Khdair wrote to the U.S. Embassy in Jerusalem. An embassy officer called him once and told him the embassy could help him obtain a new travel document, but not do much else. No one has contacted him since. When Mr. Khdair attempted to file a complaint with the Israeli police, officers refused to take his statement as an

American citizen, telling him, "You are a Palestinian," and recorded it in Hebrew through a translator. On September 5, the day after the attack, Ambassador Huckabee visited nearby Turmus Ayya and told reporters the embassy "can't investigate criminal activity" and, without mentioning Mr. Khdair, described the settlers responsible for such attacks as "a tiny little group of marauders."

Mr. Khdair's case reflects a broader trend. Settlers have killed three U.S. citizens since July 2025: Sayfollah Musallet, beaten to death in Sinjil on July 11, 2025; Khamis Ayyad, who died in a settler arson attack in Silwad on July 31, 2025; and Nasrallah Abu Siyam, shot and beaten to death in Mukhmas on February 18, 2026, as soldiers stood by. No one has been charged in any of the three killings, or in the killing of any of the 14 U.S. citizens DAWN has documented by Israeli soldiers or settlers since 2003. In August, settlers besieged the Qusra home of Loui Ridi of Toledo, Ohio, for ten days while soldiers looked on, an act Ambassador Huckabee called "a horrific act of terror" by "Israeli terrorists." In September, settlers torched three vehicles outside the Abu Falah home of Mustafa Zaatar, a U.S. citizen. According to a letter twelve senators and nine House members sent you in August, the Department of Justice "has reportedly not opened investigations into any of the killings since 2025." The evidence is overwhelming that Israeli authorities will not fill that gap: Yesh Din's data show that 93.6 percent of investigations into settler attacks on Palestinians between 2005 and 2025 were closed without an indictment, and police investigations of nationalist crime against Palestinians have fallen by 73 percent since 2023.

Far from a law-enforcement problem with a few bad apples, settler violence is a state-backed project. Human Rights Watch found in August that the Israeli government is "arming, funding, and granting impunity to the violent settlers," including by calling some 5,500 settler reservists into "regional defense" battalions and by giving civilian "rapid response squads" in settlements "special policing powers, uniforms, and weapons." Yesh Din reports that roughly 7,000 armed settlers have served in those units, that "not a single indictment has been filed against any of the settler-soldiers," and that Israel's policies "have effectively created armed militias in the West Bank." The U.N. Commission of Inquiry concluded in June that settler violence "functions as a means of implementing Israeli State policy" and that there has been a "de facto collapse of the distinction

between settlers and soldiers." The International Court of Justice found in July 2024 that Israel's "systematic failure to prevent or to punish attacks by settlers" violates its obligations as an occupying power, and Article 29 of the Fourth Geneva Convention makes an occupying power responsible for the treatment of protected persons "by its agents." Under the customary rules of state responsibility codified by the International Law Commission, the conduct of soldiers and mobilized reservists is attributable to Israel even where they exceed their orders, and attacks by armed civilians that soldiers direct, escort or join are attributable to Israel as the state controlling the operation. The soldiers who stood beside the settlers on the road at al-Mughayyir, who fired tear gas at the villagers coming to Mr. Khdair's aid, and who stood by as Mr. Abu Siyam was killed belong to units of a foreign security force within the meaning of the Leahy Law.

U.S. law provides you with the tools to respond, and none of them has been used.

First, the U.S. Department of State Foreign Affairs Manual directs consular officers assisting victims of crime to help them make a police report and to remain in contact with local police and medical facilities "until the situation is stabilized." We ask that the Department of State provide Mr. Khdair the assistance its own manual promises: that it formally request that the Israel Police register his complaint and investigate it, that it press for the return of his stolen property and the prosecution of his attackers, that it assign a consular officer to remain in contact with him and the Israeli authorities, and that it report to Congress on the consular assistance provided to each U.S. citizen killed or injured by settlers or soldiers in the West Bank since January 2022.

Second, 18 U.S.C. § 2332 makes it a federal crime to kill a U.S. national outside the United States, or to engage in physical violence with intent to cause, or resulting in, serious bodily injury to a U.S. national, where the Attorney General certifies that the offense was intended to coerce, intimidate or retaliate against a government or a civilian population. That element is satisfied on the account of your own ambassador, who has repeatedly described these attacks as "terror." Where the perpetrators are soldiers or mobilized reservists, 18 U.S.C. § 2441 separately criminalizes grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions committed against U.S. nationals. We ask that the Department of Justice and the FBI open investigations into the attacks on Mr. Khdair, Mr. Musallet, Mr. Ayyad and Mr.

Abu Siyam, and that the Attorney General issue the certifications required under § 2332(d).

Third, the Leahy Law, 22 U.S.C. § 2378d, prohibits assistance to any unit of a foreign security force where the Secretary of State has credible information that the unit has committed a gross violation of human rights. The Department has never applied that provision to a single Israeli unit, even though its own Office of Inspector General identified "many hundreds" of potential violations. Palestinian families supported by DAWN sued the Department of State in December 2024 under the Administrative Procedure Act over its refusal to apply the law to Israel; that case is ongoing in the U.S. District Court for the District of Columbia. We ask that the Department identify the units present at al-Mughayyir on September 4, at Mukhmas on February 18 and at Qusra in August, and the regional defense battalions and rapid response squads whose members have been identified in attacks on Palestinians, and make the determinations the statute requires.

Palestinian Americans are entitled to the same protection from their government as any other citizen.

Sincerely,

Omar Shakir
Executive Director, Democracy for the Arab World Now (DAWN)

Jenin Younes
President, American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)