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United States Senate

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October 9, 2026

James Risch
U.S. Senator
Chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee
483 Russell Senate Office Building
Washington, D.C. 20510

Dear Senator Risch,

I write to respectfully request that the Senate Foreign Relations Committee hold a hearing on concerning reports regarding how Ambassador Mike Huckabee and his advisor, David Milstein, have obstructed congressional inquiries into the lack of accountability for the killing of American citizens and ongoing violence in the West Bank. The American people deserve answers about what's happening in the West Bank, especially when it comes to the deaths of American citizens. It is unacceptable that Amb. Huckabee and his staff continue to cover up and block access to essential information about these killings. Congress must seek answers. Regardless of political party, we should not accept the withholding of information from Congress and the precedent this sets in undermining our constitutional responsibility.

The job of a U.S. ambassador, and their staff, whether a political or civilian employee, is to defend and protect U.S. interests. As these reports lay bare, both Ambassador Huckabee and David Milstein have failed to do so. They have undermined the essential functions of the U.S. embassy in Israel, which includes protecting and assisting American citizens, as well as reporting unvarnished facts on the ground back to Washington. Instead, Amb. Huckabee and David Milstein have become apologists for the most extreme Israeli government in history, even when the Israeli government actions undermined the Trump Administration's own stated priorities.

In March of this year, 30 of my colleagues joined me in sending a letter to Secretary Rubio and Ambassador Huckabee concerning the death of Nasrallah Abu Siyam, a 19-year-old Palestinian shot and killed in the West Bank by violent Israeli settlers during an attack on Palestinian farmers. In the letter, we asked the Ambassador to hold the government of Israel accountable for the killings of nine Americans citizens over the last four years, as well as to provide "an update on the status of investigations into the killings of all the other Americans killed in the West Bank since January 2022." We never received that update. Instead, in their response to us, we were told that the Embassy "has been working closely with our Israeli counterparts to ensure accountability for these deaths" but that further coordination of these issues with Israel have run into "logistical and operational challenges" due to the war with Iran.

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We now know the real reason why we never received that update. According to a report from the *New York Times*, when Embassy staff received our letter, they drafted a report that detailed the status of each investigation into the Americans killed in the West Bank. The report said that no one had been held accountable for any of these killings. Milstein stonewalled the report and instead insisted “that the embassy should send a letter saying that Israel was properly handling the investigations.” This is an unacceptable example of an unelected staffer obstructing Congress from obtaining critical information on the killing of American citizens and violence in the West Bank. I ask you join me in requesting the Department provide Congress with that original draft report so we can get the answers we requested.

This reporting, as well as previous reports, go on to show that Milstein sought to downplay cables that described the horrific mass killings of Palestinians seeking aid at the now defunct Gaza Humanitarian Foundation disruption sites, where thousands of Palestinians were killed seeking food. Milstein also used his position to portray recent Israeli government actions which gave them more control over the West bank and made it easier for Israelis to buy West Bank land, at odds with President Trump’s opposition to West Bank annexation, as a “domestic matter,” and has rewritten or delayed multiple cables to paint the actions of the government of Israel in a more favorable light. This includes reversing cables on settler violence from mentioning Israel’s failure to curb settler violence to praising them for taking action. Previous reporting also found that Milstein’s control over Embassy procedures has created a chilling effect throughout the Embassy, undermining core functions of the Department’s work. Milstein was also implicated in the firing of a State Department communications officer working on Israeli-Palestinian affairs for recommending mentions in State Department materials of opposing forced displacement of Palestinian civilians and sympathy for journalists killed in Gaza.

In the Department’s response to our March 2026 letter, they insisted that “The Department’s highest priority is the safety and security of American citizens abroad.” We must hold them to this standard and hold a hearing to determine what the Department knows, as well as request the original report written by embassy staff on the status about these killings.

Respectfully,

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Chris Van Hollen".

Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator