

Congress of the United States

Washington, DC 20515

August 25, 2026

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

Dear Secretary Rubio,

We write with urgency to demand that the Department of State act now to ensure the immediate and permanent release of U.S. citizen Sama Safi, a 20-year-old university student with a severe complex chronic health condition, who the Israeli military has arbitrarily and wrongfully detained since June 2nd. Sama's medical condition has rapidly deteriorated after being subjected to abysmal detention conditions in the months since armed Israeli soldiers raided her family's home in the occupied West Bank in the middle of the night and tore her from her family. Her doctors have warned of irreversible and life-threatening damage to her internal organs if her detention continues. You have a duty to secure the safety and security of U.S. citizens abroad, and we urge you to act quickly to prevent further irreparable harm to Sama by securing her immediate release.

Sama, a current honors psychology student at Birzeit University in the occupied West Bank, was kidnapped and detained without charge in a pre-dawn raid on June 2nd, as part of a series of raids targeting Birzeit University students that morning that wrongfully detained three other young women: Natalie Abu Diah, Leila Khalil, and Joulan Abu Awad. This targeting of Palestinian students is not an isolated incident but part of what United Nations human rights experts have called a systematic policy to "undermine the right to education."¹

Since June 2nd, Sama has suffered under appalling conditions in Israeli military detention. She has been transferred through multiple facilities, including an illegal transfer out of the occupied West Bank to the Damon Israeli military prison near Haifa—a blatant violation of the 4th Geneva Convention.² Sama has described the use of serious physical violence by guards against detainees, including frequent physical assault, shackling, and the throwing of gas and stun grenades into already overcrowded and poorly ventilated cells. Sama recounted her treatment, stating, "After I was taken into custody, I was shackled, blindfolded, driven around for several hours. I was given no food or water for the first 24 hours." She describes being subjected to

¹ "Israel's continuous assaults on Birzeit University are an attack on education itself: UN experts," United Nations Office of the High Commissioner for Human Rights, January 22, 2026, <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2026/01/israels-continuous-assaults-birzeit-university-are-attack-education-itself>.

² Geneva Convention Relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, August 12, 1949, 75 U.N.T.S. 287, <https://hrlibrary.umn.edu/instree/y4gcpcp.htm>.

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repeated verbal abuse and being placed in painful stress positions, as well as the presence of rapidly spreading infectious skin disease, rats, and mattresses reeking of feces.

These inhumane conditions and violence towards detainees are not unique to one facility. They are systemic and well-documented throughout Israel's vast military prison system, where thousands of Palestinians are held every day, many indefinitely and without charge. In December, the United Nations Committee Against Torture denounced Israel's application of "a de facto State policy of organized and widespread torture and ill-treatment" in these prisons, including evidence of sexual violence, electrocution, waterboarding, systemic denial of medical care, denial of adequate nutrition and water, and deprivation of clothing, sleep, and access to hygiene facilities.³

Such wretched conditions and treatment have caused Sama's health to rapidly decline to dangerous levels in detention. Sama suffers from a severe and complex chronic medical condition known as Familial Mediterranean Fever (FMF), which requires regular monitoring, daily medication, and recurring specialized biologic treatment abroad. Sama has reported receiving her medication inconsistently throughout her detention, resulting in frequent missed doses. Since returning to detention on August 16 following a brief medical release, Sama has reportedly not once received her daily medication nor been seen by doctors. Stress positions and shackling have exacerbated her condition, causing severe rheumatoid and chest pain. Her doctors have warned that with her continued military detention and "being constantly exposed to conditions that exacerbate her inflammatory status, the possibility of progressive tissue injury and irreversible organ damage is our greatest concern."

Every day that Sama remains wrongfully detained in these inhumane conditions, she is at greater risk of irreversible and life-threatening repercussions. On August 17, over 100 faith-based, human rights, and civil rights groups wrote to you urging immediate action to secure her release.⁴ It is your responsibility to ensure the safety of all Americans abroad, with no exceptions. Her life is at risk on your watch. We urge you to act swiftly and use every tool at your disposal to secure the immediate release of Sama Safi so that she can receive the medical care she urgently needs and return to her family, her studies, and the life and freedom that every 20-year-old deserves.

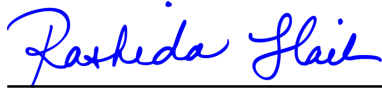
Sincerely,

³ "Concluding observations on the sixth periodic report of Israel," United Nations Committee Against Torture, December 22, 2025, <https://www.un.org/unispal/document/committee-against-torture-concluding-observations-on-the-sixth-periodic-report-of-israel-report-cat-c-isr-co-6/>.

⁴ Julia Conley, "102 Rights Groups Demand Rubio Secure Release of US Citizen Imprisoned in Israel," *Truthout*, August 18, 2026, <https://truthout.org/articles/102-rights-groups-demand-rubio-secure-release-of-us-citizen-imprisoned-in-israel/>.

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Rashida Tlaib
Member of Congress



Greg Casar
Member of Congress



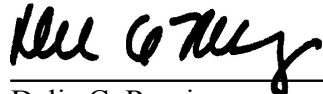
Analilia Mejia
Member of Congress



Summer L. Lee
Member of Congress



Lateefah Simon
Member of Congress



Delia C. Ramirez
Member of Congress



Chris Deluzio
Member of Congress



Pramila Jayapal
Member of Congress



André Carson
Ranking Member, Aviation
Subcommittee



Derek T. Tran
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Maxine Waters
Member of Congress



Maxwell Alejandro Frost
Member of Congress

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Henry C. "Hank" Johnson, Jr.
Member of Congress



James P. McGovern
Member of Congress



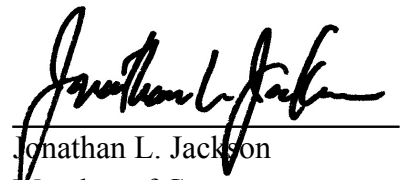
Ayanna Pressley
Member of Congress



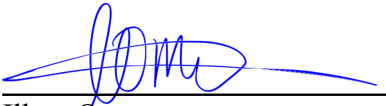
Mark DeSaulnier
Member of Congress



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jonathan L. Jackson
Member of Congress



Ilhan Omar
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Peter Welch
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Paul D. Tonko
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Ro Khanna
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Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez
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Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Betty McCollum
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Lloyd Doggett
Member of Congress



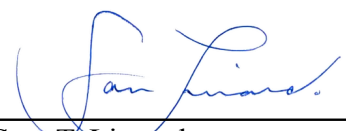
Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Adenita S. Grijalva
Member of Congress



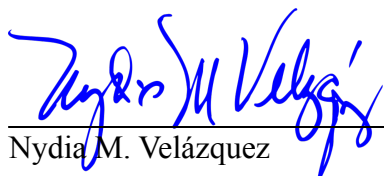
Al Green
Member of Congress



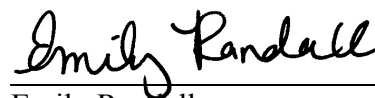
Sam T. Liccardo
Member of Congress



Maxine Dexter, M.D.
Member of Congress



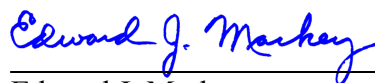
Nydia M. Velázquez
Member of Congress



Emily Randall
Member of Congress



Jesús G. "Chuy" García
Member of Congress



Edward J. Markey
United States Senator

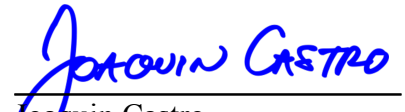
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Yassamin Ansari
Member of Congress


Jeffrey A. Merkley
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Emanuel Cleaver, II
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Joaquin Castro
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Bonnie Watson Coleman
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