



STATE OF ILLINOIS
103RD GENERAL ASSEMBLY
HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

ABDELNASSER RASHID
STATE REPRESENTATIVE
21ST DISTRICT

Dear Colleagues,

Thank you for the many messages and calls checking in on me and my family.

As some of you know, I am visiting my parents and relatives in Palestine. The village I grew up in, Turmusayya, is near Ramallah and only twenty-five miles from Jerusalem. I lived here from ages five to eleven and have been back many times since. I came to visit with my wife and our three kids last week, eager to reconnect with family and friends.

I was in the nearby city of Ramallah on Wednesday, June 21 running errands when I got a frantic call from my mom. She said the village was under attack by a mob of armed Israeli settlers. As we spoke, my phone was inundated with videos and pictures of the live attack. I got off the phone and began contacting the U.S. embassy, the State Department and others. I felt incredibly guilty that I could not be there to help protect my parents. It soon became clear that hundreds of Israeli settlers invaded the village, torched dozens of homes and cars, burned agricultural land, and injured many villagers. One young man, Omar Quttain, was killed. His wife is an American citizen and they have two children.

The next day, Thursday, I'll never forget the feeling I got when I saw a text message saying settlers were back—this time in my neighborhood. Within moments, I saw people running in the streets. One man was sprinting to each house yelling "flee your homes!" Then the gunshots started and we knew we needed to stay inside. I ran outside yelling for my family to get inside. We barricaded doors, closed windows, and started making a safety plan. My seven-year-old daughter held on to me tight and asked, crying: "What do we do if we get shot?" I truly did not know during this period whether we would be killed.

My eleven-year-old nephew was playing with his cousins down the street. My sister-in-law was hysterical. We had to stop her from running in that direction because she could be in the line of fire. She agreed to stay only after we confirmed that adults had gathered children playing outside and took them into a nearby home, and that he was with them.

To our indescribable relief, this was a smaller invasion and the settlers were pushed back by villagers. One person counted seeing ten settlers. We don't know exactly how many there were total. Had it been hundreds of settlers invading, like the previous day, my family and I could have been massacred.

I have been in contact with senior State Department officials since Wednesday. I also want to thank everyone who immediately sprang into action on Thursday when I sent the urgent messages asking for help reaching federal officials.

I had to have the conversation with my kids that every Palestinian parent has: that the Israeli government does not believe we deserve equal rights, that we have to be especially careful because we can be hurt or even killed with no accountability or consequences. Some of you know the heavy feeling of having this type of conversation with young children.

Every night since Wednesday, I have been helping keep watch in case settlers invade again. One of the highest-ranking Israeli government officials, Minister of Security Itamar Ben Gvir, is actively calling on Israeli settlers to take up arms against Palestinians, and they have attacked at least seventeen villages in recent days. Netanyahu announced last week approval of further illegal settlement expansion. I am now getting reports that settler attacks were advertised online in advance, but were ignored by the Israeli military. It is unfortunately very clear to Palestinians that Israel is allowing the settlers to do the dirty work of attacking and terrorizing Palestinians to help achieve their goals of further illegal expansion.

Last night, my daughter asked me if the Israelis would attack while she slept. “Is it true they can come at night?” she asked, hesitating to get ready for bed. Her younger sister woke up in the middle of the night and would only go back to sleep if I was next to her. Our visit here is temporary—we will be back in Chicago in July. But the thousands of people who will remain in the village, and millions of Palestinians in the region will continue to experience the daily fear, violence, and trauma of Israeli military occupation.

Many of you have asked me how me and my family are doing and if there are new developments. I will be creating a WhatsApp and/or Signal group to keep you updated, only open to Illinois House and Illinois Senate Democrats. Please let me know if you would like me to add you to the group.

Best,
Abdelnasser Rashid
State Representative, 21st District