

February 2, 2016

House Committee on Oversight and Government Reform
National Security Subcommittee
2471 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, D.C. 2051

To Whom It May Concern:

My name is Mark Sokolow, and my family and I are United States citizens. My wife and I live in Cedarhurst, New York.

In January 2002, my wife and I took our two daughters - ages 12 and 16 - on a family trip to Israel to visit our oldest daughter who was studying in Jerusalem for the year.

On what was supposed to be the last day of our trip, the four of us went for some last minute shopping in central Jerusalem. We bought shoes, and right after we left the store, Wafa Idris, the first female suicide bomber, blew herself up right in front of us. She was a member of the Al-Aqsa Martyrs' Brigade, the military wing of Fatah, which is a part of the Palestinian Liberation Organization.

We were all thrown to the ground and sustained significant burns and shrapnel injuries. We were taken to three different hospitals, and for several hours I didn't know what had become of my family.

My wife - Rena - suffered a severe leg injury that required immediate surgery to save her leg, and she had to stay in Israel for another 10 days. Rena was not able to walk for six months following the attack and has permanent damage to her leg. She will never forget the sight of the severed head of the suicide bomber lying next to her on the ground.

Our youngest daughter - Jamie, just 12 years old - suffered a severe eye injury that required her to remain in the hospital for a week and to have follow-up surgery just a few years ago.

Our daughter Lauren and I also suffered burst eardrums that needed follow-up surgery following the attack.

We all suffer from Post Traumatic Stress Disorder and not a day goes by when we don't think about the traumatic events of that day.

Throughout the days, months and years of our recovery from this horrific ordeal, we were contacted only once or twice by the Office of Justice for Victims of Overseas Terrorism (the "Office"), by what seemed to be a generic form letter. We did not receive any assistance with our medical needs from the Office nor, to our knowledge, did the Office seek to monitor, investigate, extradite and prosecute those that were responsible for carrying out the attack against me and my family.

I sincerely hope that this Subcommittee can investigate the Office and its affairs to ensure that the Office exercises its authority and mandate and provides the much-needed assistance to the countless number of victims of Palestinian terror.

Very truly yours,
/s/ Mark I. Sokolow
Mark I. Sokolow