



April 3, 2026

The Honorable Marco Rubio  
The Secretary of State  
2201 C Street, NW  
Washington, D.C. 20520

Dear Mr. Secretary,

We are writing on behalf of Reporters Without Borders (RSF), the Committee to Protect Journalists (CPJ), and the Foley Foundation to urge the U.S. government to secure the immediate, safe release of American journalist Shelly Kittleson, who was abducted in Baghdad on March 31.

As an immediate policy step, we respectfully urge you to formally designate Ms. Kittleson as a hostage. This designation would send a clear message that the U.S. government is committed to using every available resource and channel to bring Ms. Kittleson home safely and swiftly. Ms. Kittleson, 49, is an [award-winning journalist](#) who has reported from Iraq and the broader Middle East for more than a decade. She holds full press accreditation, has completed hostile environment training, and was in Baghdad when she was abducted.

We also urge you to unequivocally condemn the targeting of journalists, regardless of nationality or affiliation, and to take effective measures to seek accountability for such attacks and deter future ones. You stated on the Senate floor in 2017 that “without independent journalists and without information, tyrants and dictatorships can get away with so much more.” We share that conviction. Journalists reporting from war zones and conflict-affected areas fulfill a vital public service under dangerous conditions, and Ms. Kittleson’s work exemplifies that commitment.

We recognize the Trump administration’s impressive diplomatic work in securing the recent release of journalists and human rights defenders in Belarus and Russia, and we urge you to bring that same resolve to bear in bringing Ms. Kittleson home. We are closely monitoring this situation and are at your disposal to help expedite her release.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter and for your commitment to Ms. Kittleson.

Sincerely,

Jodie Ginsberg, Chief Executive Officer, Committee to Protect Journalists  
Clayton Weimers, Executive Director, Reporters Without Borders, Inc. (RSF USA)  
Benjamin Gray, Executive Director, Foley Foundation