

Support Human Rights for Palestinians

Israel's recent airstrikes in Gaza killed [at least 248 Palestinians, including 66 children](#).¹ As [UN human rights experts](#)² wrote: "The firing by Israel of missiles and shells into heavily populated areas of Gaza – particularly with the rising civilian toll and property destruction – constitute indiscriminate and disproportionate attacks against civilians and civilian property. These attacks likely violate the laws of war and constitute a war crime." Hamas launched rockets indiscriminately killing at least 12. As a matter of law, all military forces involved have engaged in war crimes. As a matter of policy and moral culpability, U.S. military support *enabled* the Israeli military's violence.

Human Rights Concerns Must Become More Central in U.S.-Israel Policy

- Israel is historically by far the [largest recipient of U.S. foreign aid](#)³, with \$3.8 billion a year currently going to military aid for Israel. U.S. foreign military financing (FMF) grants to Israel total more than those to every other country in the world combined.
- President Biden's [national security strategy](#)⁴ calls for the United States to prioritize human rights as part of his effort to restore a multilateral foreign policy that respects international law. After the violence in Gaza, other nations are looking to see if the President lives up to his pledge here.

Congress Can Help Protect the Rights of Palestinian Children and Families Now By Co-Sponsoring H.R. 2590

- Israeli security forces detain around [500-700 Palestinian children every year](#).⁵ They are placed into a military court system that fails to protect their fundamental rights. Abusive physical violence, including [chokeholds and beatings](#),⁶ is experienced by three out of four of these children. These violations have been documented by the [UN](#)⁷, the State Department, as well as by human rights organizations.
- In 2020 alone, [Israel demolished 854 Palestinian structures](#)⁸ in the occupied West Bank displacing 996 people, according to the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (OCHA). Israel is also confiscating family homes as part of decades of discriminatory planning designed to confine Palestinians to dense population centers in the Occupied Territories. So far in 2021, the rate of demolition has increased by 90%.
- [H.R. 2590 introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum \(D-MN\)](#), would ensure that no U.S. taxpayer funds are used by the Israeli government for 1) the military detention of Palestinian children; 2) the demolition of Palestinian homes and property; and 3) to further annex Palestinian land in violation of international law.
- The bill states that it is the sense of Congress that these actions undermine efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis; that promoting human rights, dignity, and democracy for all Palestinians and Israelis is a foreign policy priority for the U.S.; and that the U.S. rejects undemocratic systems and acts of aggression in which Israeli unilaterally exercises permanent rule over Palestinians denied self-determination and human rights.
- H.R. 2590 is endorsed by a coalition of over [100 organizations](#)⁹ including MoveOn, Jewish Voice for Peace, Presbyterian Church, Working Families Party, Oxfam, United Church of Christ, and J Street.

Congress Should Support a Halt to Pending Arms Sales to Israel

- Just before the recent violence, the Biden administration approved a \$735 million sale of weapons systems and munitions to Israel. The proposed sale would include Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMS), which are believed to have [been used in the recent violence](#)¹⁰ that killed so many civilians. The U.S. has sold these types of "smart bomb" missiles to Israel in the past.
- U.S. law already makes clear that all countries receiving U.S. aid need to meet human rights standards, and that violation of these standards can lead to sanctions and the curtailment of aid. These laws, including the [Foreign Assistance Act](#), [Arms Export Control Act](#) and [Leahy Laws](#) are

meant to ensure that human rights are protected when it comes to U.S. military aid and arms sales.

- U.S. weapons have killed civilians in repeated airstrikes in Gaza for over a decade. Congress cannot let these transfers move forward when there is a clear, foreseeable risk — if not a likelihood — that these weapons will be used to violate human rights in the future.
- Majorities of Democrats, independents and Republican voters all support restricting aid¹¹ to human rights violators. Specifically, [recent polling](#)¹¹ shows a growing skepticism regarding U.S. arms sales to Israel, especially with Democratic and Independent voters.

Steps Members of Congress Can Take

- **Cosponsor H.R. 2590 introduced by Rep. Betty McCollum (D-MN).**
- **Publicly call on the Biden administration to halt the \$735 million weapons sale to the Israeli government.** Support efforts to block this sale as well as all efforts to ensure that our weapons are not used in violation of international humanitarian law and U.S. laws on weapons transfers.

1 Roth, Kenneth, *It's Time to Update the U.S. Approach to Israeli Rights Abuses*, Newsweek, May 27, 2021

2 *Gaza-Israel escalation: End violence now, then work to end occupation, say UN experts*, United Nations Human Rights Council, May 18, 2021

3 *U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel*, Congressional Research Service, November 16, 2020

4 President Joseph R. Biden, Jr., *Interim National Security Strategic Guidance*, The White House, March 2021

5 *Number of Palestinian Children (12-17) in Israeli Military Detention*, Defense for Children International, October 2, 2020

6 *Israel: Security Forces Abuse Palestinian Children: Chokeholds, Beatings, Coercive Interrogations*, Human Rights Watch, July 19, 2015

7 *Children in Israeli Military Detention: Observations and Recommendations*, UNICEF, February 2013

8 *West Bank Demolitions and Displacement: An Overview*, United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs, April 2021

9 *H.R. 2590 Endorsing Organizations*, No Way to Treat a Child, April 16, 2021

10 O'Connor, Tom, *Biden's \$735 Million Arms Sale to Israel to Include Missile Type That Hit Gaza Tower*, Newsweek, May 17, 2021

11 Saltzberg, Emma, *Reduce Aid to Israel Based on Human Rights Violations*, Data for Progress, 2020