

National Coalition Urges Congress to Confront U.S. Complicity in Civilian Harm in Gaza

After months of devastation, there is urgent need for a meaningful debate on U.S. support for Israeli operations, including the extent to which U.S. military aid may be supporting violations of international human rights and humanitarian law in both Gaza and the West Bank.

This week, a coalition of more than 70 national organizations sent a letter to members of Congress urging them to cosponsor and vote in favor of [S.Res.504](#), Sen. Bernie Sanders' (VT) resolution under [Section 502B\(c\) of the Foreign Assistance Act](#). The legislation requires a State Department report on Israel's human rights practices and U.S. military aid to Israel.

The letter was organized by the Friends Committee on National Legislation and Center for Civilians in Conflict. Over 70 national groups representing millions of Americans signed it, including Americans for Peace Now, Amnesty International USA, Churches for Middle East Peace (CMEP), Demand Progress Action, Indivisible, U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, National Council of Churches, If Not Now Movement, Oxfam America, Center for International Policy, and Win Without War.

January 11, 2024

Dear Senators,

We, the undersigned organizations, urge you to cosponsor and vote in favor of [S.Res.504](#), Senator Bernie Sanders' resolution under [Section 502B\(c\) of the Foreign Assistance Act](#) (22 U.S.C. § 2304) requiring a report on Israel's human rights practices and U.S. military aid to Israel. After months of devastation in Gaza, there is urgent need for a meaningful debate on U.S. support for Israeli operations in Gaza and the West Bank, including the extent to which U.S. military aid may be supporting violations of international human rights and humanitarian law.

In response to the horrific October 7th attacks by Hamas, Israel has conducted a military campaign [resulting](#) in the deaths of more than 20,000 Palestinians in Gaza, approximately [70 percent](#) of whom are women and children. Senator Sanders recently [called](#) the bombardment of Gaza "not just a humanitarian cataclysm, but a mass atrocity. And it is being done with bombs & equipment produced and provided by the United States and heavily subsidized by American taxpayers." President Biden has also [stated](#) that Israel is engaging in "indiscriminate bombing."

Human rights organizations, including Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch, have [documented egregious violations of](#) international humanitarian law by both Hamas and the Israeli military. Hamas' atrocities on October 7th -- as well as its continued holding of hostages and rocket launches into Israel -- do not relieve Israel of its responsibility to protect its people in a manner consistent with international humanitarian law. But as the Israeli offensive devastates Gaza, including through Israel's siege, the United States continues to provide a steady stream of [bombs](#), [missiles](#), [drones](#), [artillery shells](#), and [ammunition](#) – [all apparently without conditions](#).

The Biden administration has even bypassed Congressional oversight through an emergency transfer authority. Despite investigations revealing potential war crimes committed by Israeli forces, the State Department has [admitted](#) that it has not been assessing Israel's compliance with international law throughout the conflict.

S.Res.504 offers an opportunity to affirm Congress's important [oversight role](#), mandating that the Biden administration document and report on any human rights violations committed by the Israeli government. Congress should ensure that arms transfers and military aid provided to Israel, or any country, are consistent with U.S. law and policy, international law, and civilian protection responsibilities. The resolution would be an important step toward these goals.

Upon Senate passage, this resolution would require a report from the State Department on Israel's human rights practices within thirty days. The resolution and debate it generates would open the door to potential follow-on Congressional action.

Congress stands at a pivotal moment. It is long overdue for the Senate to hold a public vote and debate on U.S. complicity in Israeli human rights abuses against Palestinians living under occupation and bombardment, and to reassert Congressional oversight powers over U.S. arms transfer policy and foreign policy. We, the undersigned organizations, endorse this resolution and urge all Senators to cosponsor and vote in favor of [S.Res.504](#).

Sincerely,

Action Corps
Alliance of Baptists
American Federation of Ramallah, Palestine
American Friends Service Committee
Americans for Peace Now
Amnesty International USA
Antiwar.com
Armenian National Committee of America
Arms Control Association
Avaaz
Campaign for Peace, Disarmament, and Common Security
Carolina Peace Center
Center for Civilians in Conflict
Center for International Policy
Center for Jewish Nonviolence
Center for Victims of Torture
Church of the Brethren, Office of Peacebuilding and Policy
Church World Service
Churches for Middle East Peace
CODEPINK
CommonDefense.us

Community of Christ
Community Peacemaker Teams
Delawareans for Palestinian Human Rights
Demand Progress Action
Democracy for the Arab World Now
Democratic Socialists of America
Evangelical Lutheran Church in America
Fellowship of Reconciliation
Franciscan Action Network
Freedom Forward
Friends Committee on National Legislation (FCNL)
Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA)
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
IfNotNow Movement
Indivisible
Institute for Policy Studies New Internationalism Project
International Civil Society Action Network (ICAN)
Just Foreign Policy
Legacies of War
Libertarian Institute
MADRE
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Middle East Democracy Center (MEDC)
Migrant Roots Media
Minnesota Peace Project
MPower Change Action Fund
National Council of Churches
National Iranian American Council Action
Nonviolence International
Nonviolent Peaceforce
Oxfam America
Pax Christi USA
Peace Action
Presbyterian Church (USA) Office of Public Witness
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
Quixote Center
Rachel Corrie Foundation for Peace
ReThinking Foreign Policy
RootsAction.org
Saferworld
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Sojourners
The Episcopal Church
The Riverside Church in the City of New York

U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights
U.S. Palestinian Council
United for Peace and Justice
United Methodist Church — General Board of Church and Society
Washington Advocates for Palestinian Rights
Win Without War
Women for Weapons Trade Transparency
Working Families Party
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation
Yemeni Alliance Committee