



## [Congressional Ceasefire Advocates Grow in Number](#)

By Colin Bailey

Israeli attacks on the Gaza Strip have reportedly killed over 13,000 Palestinians as the war enters its seventh week. Footage of events on the ground has dominated social media platforms and made headlines across the globe, including in the United States where views of the population have gradually leaned in favor of a truce.

Sixty eight percent of adults support a ceasefire according to a recent Reuters poll. Conversely, only 32% of respondents said “the U.S. should support Israel” when asked about America’s involvement in the conflict. This is down drastically from the 41% of respondents in October with both sides of the aisle supporting a ceasefire.

Politicians, however, remain strongly opposed to demands for a ceasefire, even though their constituents have demonstrably shown they favor one. It was only this week that two senators finally expressed public support for an end to the violence: Dick Durbin (D) of Illinois and Jeff Merkley (D) of Oregon. On Monday, Merkley posted on X, the social media platform formerly known as Twitter, “I am calling for a ceasefire - a cessation of hostilities by both sides.”

The House of Representatives has predominantly opposed pressuring the Israelis to halt or end their campaign with only 40 of the 435 members pushing for a pause. Most government officials continue to move apportion financial and military aid, including reports that American boots are on the ground. Notably, of the congressmen calling for a ceasefire, three are Jewish: Jamie Raskin (D-MD), Sara Jacobs (D-CA), and Becca Balint (D-VT). Jacobs stated on X last Saturday that “[i]t is time for a bilateral ceasefire - to immediately release the hostages; to establish humanitarian access and allow fuel, food, water, and medical care into Gaza; and to end the bombardment of millions of Palestinian civilians.”

Congressmen in the House showing a greater propensity to change their views in line with their public opinion than Senators is a common occurrence, given that the former serve for two years while the latter enjoy six-year terms. Nevertheless, the majority remain staunchly intent on silencing criticism of the Israelis; and in late October voted to censure Rashida Tlaib (D-MI), the only Palestinian-American in Congress, for her stance on the conflict. Defiantly, she stated: “While there are growing attempts to silence the diverse coalition of people advocating for peace, fighting to save lives no matter their faith or ethnicity should not be controversial, we will not be intimidated, we will not be silenced, and we will not stop calling for an end to this violence.”

Public opinion appears to have affected the executive branch. A recent, national NBC News poll shows that President Joe Biden’s approval rating has declined to 40%, the lowest level of his presidency, with majorities of voters disapproving of his handling of foreign policy and the Israeli-Gaza war. While initially turning a blind eye to the indiscriminate assault on Gaza, the Administration recently softened their stance, with President Biden “announcing \$100 million in new US funding for both Gaza and the West Bank.” He added “This money will support more than one million displaced and conflict-affected Palestinians, including emergency needs in Gaza.”

Members of Congress opposed to a ceasefire cite the hostages taken by Hamas as a critical reason for their reticence, insisting on their unconditional release. The Administration for its part has worked in parallel on providing humanitarian assistance as well as pressing the Israelis to compromise. After weeks of negotiations, it appears 50 female and child hostages, including three American citizens, will finally be released as a four-day truce has finally been agreed. Should this truce hold, it will be the first time in seven weeks that Gaza will not be struck by Israeli missiles. Plans are already in the works for the ceasefire to be extended day by day so long as hostages continue to be released.

The Israelis will release 150 Palestinian women and children currently imprisoned in exchange. Should the terms of the ceasefire be implemented as planned, congresspeople in the Senate and House may finally take a more favorable view of supporting a permanent ceasefire to ensure the continued release of hostages and the end of unnecessary civilian bloodshed.