



## President Biden and Other U.S. Elected Officials Back Senator Schumer's Criticism of Netanyahu

Recently last week, U.S. Senator Chuck Schumer (D-NY) called for elections in Israel, stating that Israel's Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu had "lost his way." Schumer, a long-time supporter of Netanyahu and the highest-ranking Jewish official in the U.S. government, is one of a growing list of elected officials that have criticized Israel's leader and the handling of the War on Gaza. Sharing and supporting Schumer's sentiments was President Biden, who later told Ireland's prime minister that Schumer "expressed serious concerns shared not only by him but by many Americans." Similarly, U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD) recently denounced Israel's longstanding and debunked allegations that the humanitarian agency UNRWA is a proxy group for Hamas, stating that "the claims that Prime Minister Netanyahu and others are making, that somehow UNRWA is a proxy for Hamas, are just flat-out lies." This aligns with what impartial analysts have been emphasizing for years – that Netanyahu and other hardline Israelis have been trying to taint and disband the organization for political reasons.

The escalating criticisms reflect growing disdain among U.S. officials who have become alarmed with the manner in which Netanyahu is conducting the War on Gaza. Schumer, Biden, and Van Hollen, among other elected officials and government spokespeople, have become increasingly weary of the disturbing humanitarian toll that has been incurred since the onset of Israel's military offensive and the lack of aid that is being allowed into Gaza. Other aspects of discontent have been centered around Israel's plans to invade Rafah, a move that U.S. officials have repeatedly and consistently warned against, with Netanyahu seeming insistent nevertheless. U.S. leaders are increasingly concerned over the further humanitarian calamity that an Israeli military offensive in Rafah would spur, with U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken remarking that "we have to see a clear and implementable plan" to safeguard innocent people from an Israeli incursion, but "we have not seen such a plan." Analysts have pointed out the problematic nature of Netanyahu continuing to disregard U.S. input, despite receiving billions in military aid.

In retaliatory statements, Netanyahu claimed that Schumer's call for an election was "totally inappropriate" and baselessly stated that Israelis supported his desire to "destroy the remaining Hamas terrorist battalions," something that experts say is wildly unrealistic and unattainable. Netanyahu also contended that Israel is "not a banana republic" and that "the people of Israel will choose when they will have elections, and who they'll elect, and it's not something that will be foisted on us." This is an ironic statement given that a majority of Israelis want early elections, which according to Axios polls, suggest that if an election were to be held, Netanyahu would likely be defeated by his political rival, Minister Benny Gantz. Netanyahu's hypocrisy is also evident to see, as he himself has been credibly accused many times of meddling in U.S. politics. One of Netanyahu's most blatant involvements was during the 2012 election cycle, when he threw his support behind Republican presidential candidate Mitt Romney – attempting to make himself and Israel an influential factor in the election. Netanyahu has a long history of defying U.S. presidents and officials, as exhibited in his fight against former President Barack Obama for an Iran nuclear deal and his subsequent acceptance of a Republican invitation to address U.S. Congress in opposition to Obama's efforts. Netanyahu seems to be eager to selectively decide what constitutes political interference and the will of the people.

In the Annual Threat Assessment from the Director of National Intelligence, it was determined that Netanyahu's viability as prime minister may be in jeopardy due to Israeli discontent. Public displeasure in the United States has also been shown to be on the rise, as according to recent AP-NORC surveys, Americans are increasingly disapproving of Israel's military actions in Gaza. The data reveals that 50% of the general public believes that Israel's operations in the Gaza Strip have gone too far, which includes 60% of Democrats. For this reason, a growing number of lawmakers, human rights activists, and other concerned citizens have urged for the United States to condition its military aid to Israel. It is clear that frustrations regarding Israel's handling of the war are expanding among both the U.S. public and elected officials. So far, the Biden administration's approach has been described by some observers as "passive-aggressive," with escalating rhetoric but stopping short of withdrawing support. However, a potential Israeli military offensive in Rafah could be a turning point, with reports indicating that President Biden would consider conditioning military aid to Israel should they go through with the assault.