



## [U.S. Senators Cite a Law That Should Forbid Arming Israel Due to Its Continued Blocking of Humanitarian Aid to Gaza](#)

A group of United States Senators have banded together, writing a letter to President Biden which urges him to discontinue sending arms to Israel. The lawmakers have called for a halt of weapons transfers, citing a U.S. law that prohibits the supply of weapons to foreign states that restrict humanitarian aid from reaching civilians. Eight U.S. Senators, including seven Democrats and one Independent, penned the letter to Biden detailing how both his administration and the UN have acknowledged that Israel is blocking humanitarian aid and is “one of the primary causes of this humanitarian catastrophe,” behavior that should forbid U.S. military support. The group of Senators, led by Bernie Sanders (I-VT), Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), and Jeff Merkley (D-OR), are outraged by the lack of aid going through to the besieged enclave, recognizing that Gaza is in the midst of a dire humanitarian crisis. During a recent interview on NPR, Senator Merkley stated that Israel’s screening practices of aid were “erratic and inconsistent,” and that “starvation is not a legitimate strategy, it is in fact under international law, a war crime.” Israeli forces are continuously hindering ground aid from going through to Gazan civilians in need, citing bogus security concerns.

The UN has highlighted that in order to meet the needs of civilians in Gaza, at least 300 aid trucks a day are required, however, there are currently less than half of those able to go through. The letter to Biden from the U.S. Senators is one of the latest attempts by some of the more progressive members of Congress to voice their discontent with the Netanyahu government. Congress has thus far been unable to garner the number of votes in the House and Senate that are necessary to restrict or condition military aid to Israel. Back in January, Senator Sanders introduced a bill that would have required the U.S. State Department to produce a report examining whether Israel committed human rights violations in Gaza, but the resolution failed with a vote of 72 to 11. With other Congressional measures falling short, this recent group of Senators have cited the Foreign Assistance Act to try and persuade President Biden to enact policy change.

Israel’s obstruction of humanitarian aid violates Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, which outlines that “no assistance shall be furnished to any country when it is made known to the president that the government of said country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance.” Another sub-section of the law called the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act, delineates that the president is required to halt U.S. military aid as soon as he/she is made aware that a country is blocking or restricting the delivery of American humanitarian assistance. Israel is clearly in violation of the law, yet the Biden administration has continued to send arms to Israel. Since the onset of the war, the U.S. has reportedly made more than 100 weapons transfers to Israel, with many of these sales being pushed through without congressional oversight. These weapons include precision-guided munitions, small-diameter bombs, bunker busters, small arms, and others. Many of these munitions have been directly used in the killing of Palestinian civilians, as the death toll has now surpassed 31,000. In response to these alarming figures, the group of Senators note that “immediate action is necessary to secure a change in policy” regarding Israel. According to the New York Times, the most recent aid bill to Israel will send \$14.1 billion in military support to Israel, of which \$10 billion would go toward offensive weapons to be used in Gaza. That is a disturbing \$10 billion in U.S. dollars that would be used indiscriminately against innocent civilians.

Biden administration officials have admitted that Israel is impeding deliveries and is in violation of U.S. law, but has still refused to take appropriate action. The United States could certainly be using its leverage against Israel to force policy change and allow more ground aid to enter Gaza, but instead, the Biden administration has resorted to airdropping aid and announcing plans for the construction of a temporary port. Aid groups have consistently pointed out that neither of these measures will be sufficient in alleviating the dire levels of the humanitarian crisis. Frustrated by a lack of adequate action from President Biden, members of Congress are beginning to express their dissatisfaction. The letter from the group of Senators is just one of many examples of growing frustration with the Israeli government. Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer recently called Netanyahu an obstacle to peace, and urged Israel to hold new elections. Schumer's remarks speak volumes regarding the increasingly widespread criticism of Israel's inhumane actions in Gaza.