



Reports Shed Light on Inconsistencies in U.S. Policy Regarding Palestinian Statehood and Israeli Human Rights Abuses

It was recently revealed that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken has been sitting on multiple detailed reports documenting egregious human rights abuses committed by Israeli military and police forces. A special State Department committee, known as the Leahy Vetting Forum, had recommended months ago that these groups be disqualified from receiving U.S. aid, but this failed to be acted upon by Blinken. The panel is comprised of Middle East and human rights experts. Most of the incidents under review happened before the October 7th Hamas attacks on Israel's southern border, meaning these violations took place even before Israel's increasingly criticized military operations in Gaza. The reports detail the inhumane treatment of Palestinians including extrajudicial killings, torture, and sexual violence. Continuing to send military assistance to these entities, in light of their human rights violations, is a flagrant breach of the U.S. Leahy Law – which would require the United States to disqualify sending aid to them.

Critics have voiced that Secretary Blinken's silence on these human rights abuses sends a signal to Israel that they can continue to commit rights violations without fearing the loss of American support. This undermines the rhetoric from President Biden and others which publicly criticizes Israel's behavior, while failing to take concrete measures against it. Former Director of the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs Josh Paul commented that "If we had been applying Leahy effectively in Israel like we do in other countries, maybe you wouldn't have the IDF filming TikToks of their war crimes now because we have contributed to a culture of impunity," highlighting the effects of inconsistencies in U.S. policy between rhetoric stated in public and actual actions behind the scenes. The Biden administration's failure to hold Israel accountable means that it is effectively putting up a front, saying one thing and then doing another.

An additional inconsistency was found in the administration's alleged support of a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Publicly, the Biden administration has promoted the idea of a two-state solution that would give Palestinians statehood. However, behind closed doors, the U.S. has taken a different stance. Two weeks ago, the Palestinian Ambassador to the United Nations requested full membership in the UN. In leaked diplomatic cables between the White House and the U.S. Embassy in Ecuador, Secretary of State Blinken detailed talking points opposing the UN resolution that would grant Palestine membership status within the global organization. The cables also revealed the U.S.-Ecuador plan to lobby other countries to not support the resolution. Having membership status would amount to the UN officially recognizing Palestine as a state, but first has to pass through the UN Security Council with a two-thirds majority vote. U.S. and Israeli officials had previously said that the Biden administration was attempting to prevent the vote from reaching the two-thirds mark so that it doesn't have to use its veto and risk potential international and domestic criticism. Then, however, news broke last night that the United States vetoed the widely-backed UN resolution. The vote in the 15-member UN Security Council was 12 in favor, the U.S. opposing, and two abstentions. The resolution would have passed had it not been vetoed by the U.S. – one of the five permanent members of the UN Security Council – as it had more than the nine votes in favor required to do so. Ironically, the Biden administration had claimed that if Palestine is admitted, U.S. law would have compelled it to veto the resolution or defund the UN. It is hypocritical that the administration can blatantly disregard some laws such as the Leahy Law, but then try and reference others to suit certain objectives.

Both of these aforementioned revelations raise a serious issue with the consistency of U.S. foreign policy that must be called out. U.S. leadership needs to not only “talk the talk” but also “walk the walk” with their diplomatic efforts. It is not enough to merely proclaim support of human rights and equity, while at the same time, failing to enact policies that align with these ideals. We should honor the values that we preach, and steer away from wishy-washy and inconsistent diplomacy that ultimately undermines our credibility as a leader on the global stage.