



### [Speaker Johnson Seeks to Push Through Aid to Israel Despite Concerns Over War Crimes in Gaza](#)

This week, Speaker of the United States House of Representatives Mike Johnson (R-LA) is seeking action on a military aid package to Israel, unveiling a plan to break assistance for Israel, Ukraine, and Taiwan into separate votes in an attempt to push them through individually. Speaker Johnson released the text for the Israel aid bill and others, and expressed that he expects a vote on them to take place on Saturday evening. All of this comes as Johnson faces an ouster threat from fellow Republican House members Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA) and Thomas Massie (R-KY). Providing further aid to Israel would be problematic for a number of important reasons. Firstly, doing so disregards and brushes aside serious concerns regarding the ongoing Israeli war crimes being committed in Gaza. Additionally, it sends a message to Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu's government that its early April attack on the Iranian embassy in Damascus – which prompted Iran to launch retaliatory strikes against Israel this past weekend – was being rewarded. Many countries and international organizations rightly condemned Israel for escalating hostilities and instigating regional actors with the attack; and instead of punishing Israel for both this and the increasing global outrage over its human rights violations in Gaza, the reinvigorated push to pass aid provides the notion that belligerent behavior can be used as a means of distracting attention away from other abuses. What should be focused on above all, in light of growing evidence of Israeli war crimes and human rights violations in Gaza, is humanitarian assistance for the besieged enclave – which is regrettably not being prioritized in the same manner as military aid to Israel.

For many analysts, it is clear that U.S. House Speaker Johnson is trying to separate the aid packages because he understands that a significant number of Republicans may not support it for Ukraine, while a bulk of Democrats have become increasingly troubled over Israel's military actions in Gaza. Several of these U.S. lawmakers, as well as human rights advocates, have been trying to draw attention to the fact that the United States should abide by its own laws which prohibit military aid and weapons transfers to entities engaged in international humanitarian law violations. A number of U.S. Congressmembers, including U.S. Senator Chris Van Hollen (D-MD), have been urging the Biden administration to halt military aid and transfers to Israel in light of justifiable concern regarding war crimes being committed in Gaza. It has also been pointed out that the withholding of U.S. aid to Israel would be an effective form of leveraging the latter's behavior, and could be used to both pressure Israel into allowing more urgently-needed humanitarian assistance into Gaza and protecting civilians who are being killed at an alarming rate.

On top of spurring renewed efforts to push for aid to Israel, the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate in Syria and Iran's recent retaliatory strikes have elicited fears of a potential larger-scale regional conflict. In the aftermath of the latter, U.S. President Biden told Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu that the United States would not support a further Israeli attack on Iran. Some issue experts are particularly concerned regarding the possibility of additional Israeli aggression due to the fact that Netanyahu is facing domestic discontent, and therefore, he is driven to try and retain power by continuing to prolong the conflict. They have argued that for Netanyahu, there is a motive to incite hostilities and thus the Israeli attack on the Iranian consulate in Damascus which prompted Iran's recent retaliatory strikes may very well have been a strategic attempt to trigger new escalations and distract from growing international condemnation towards Israel's human rights violations in Gaza. For Netanyahu, an end to the ongoing conflict could leave him vulnerable to face impending domestic criminal and political challenges. U.S.

President Biden himself is reported to have privately expressed concern to close aides that Netanyahu was trying to drag the United States into a broader regional conflict.

The situation between Israel and Iran has altered the narrative, and sadly shifted the focus away from Israeli human rights violations in Gaza and the dire humanitarian crisis there that has emerged as a result. As one commentator put it, the conversation has moved from rightly talking about the alarming aspects of starving children and Israeli attacks against humanitarian workers in Gaza, and has instead become preoccupied with increasingly contentious military aid. The primary concern related to Israel for Congress and the Biden administration should be striving to put an end to civilian suffering in Gaza and Israel's destructive military offensive, not pushing for something to contribute further to this.