



### [The U.S. Continues to Reward Netanyahu's War Crimes](#)

This week, U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken met with Saudi officials in Riyadh for talks on a variety of issues, including the ongoing efforts for a possible normalization deal between Saudi Arabia and Israel. The Biden administration's continued push for this now is problematic for a couple of important reasons. Firstly, it comes at a time when the Netanyahu government in Israel is facing significant worldwide condemnation and outrage regarding its abusive military actions in Gaza. Domestically in the United States, massive anti-war rallies have emerged on college campuses across the country, while a growing number of government officials have privately expressed concern with Israeli human rights violations and war crimes. At the global level, countries have brought forth cases against Israel regarding its actions in Gaza and seeking to halt increasingly-criticized arms sales. Thus, normalizing Israeli-Saudi ties would serve as a reward and diplomatic win for the Netanyahu government, despite all of its transgressions. Secondly, as fair-minded observers lamented in the past regarding the folly of the Abraham Accords, the normalization of ties between Israel and Arab nations should only take place in conjunction with fair Israeli concessions to Palestinians. In the absence of this, these deals only serve to perpetuate the status quo of continued illegal Israeli occupation and injustices.

The fact that the United States is pushing for Israeli-Saudi normalization is troubling, as U.S. officials themselves have even expressed serious concern over Netanyahu and Israel's violations of international humanitarian law during the War on Gaza. In a recently leaked internal memo, a joint assessment from multiple U.S. bureaus outlined Israel's repeated attacks against civilian infrastructure, the killing of humanitarian workers and journalists at an unprecedented rate, and the arbitrary restriction of humanitarian aid, among other unlawful actions. This is in line with what international watchdog organizations and human rights groups have been saying for months about the scale of Israeli atrocities taking place in Gaza. U.S. laws are meant to prohibit arms transfers to entities who engage in these human rights abuses, yet the Biden administration has continued to initiate weapons sales for the Netanyahu government. Instead of punishing and alienating Israel by suspending military aid, on top of this Biden officials are still striving for potential Israeli-Saudi normalization, in what would amount to a diplomatic victory for Netanyahu even in the face of the acknowledgement of these egregious war crimes.

Growing evidence of Israeli human rights abuses in Gaza has reached a point where it has also elicited concern among Netanyahu government officials. This week, it was revealed that the International Criminal Court (ICC) may issue arrest warrants for Prime Minister Netanyahu, Defense Minister Gallant, and senior military officials, prompting unease regarding the prospect of this taking place – so much so that the Israeli cabinet decided to address the matter in one of its meetings. Israeli officials are particularly unsettled that the ICC could issue secret orders, whereby individuals would only know that they were wanted when they traveled to another country. While Israel does not recognize the court's jurisdiction, any warrants would put Israeli officials at risk of being detained in other countries, including much of Europe.

In addition to the issue of pursuing normalization between Israel and Saudi Arabia given the plethora of documented recent Israeli war crimes and human rights violations committed in Gaza under the Netanyahu government, one of the supposed conditions for the potential move – a pathway towards the creation of a Palestinian state – is something that the Israeli prime minister has repeatedly rejected. This shows that there is no

intention from Israel to alter the status quo. Rather, it has been argued that what normalization would really boil down to is an unjust diplomatic prize for Israel, while Saudi Arabia reaps the benefit of U.S. agreements on defense and security commitments, as well as nuclear cooperation. The United States and Saudi Arabia are believed to be very close to completing their side of the deal, which would then, as U.S. officials put it, turn a theoretical question real and force Israeli officials to make decisions on the conditions and guarantees that are purportedly laid out. Since there is an awareness that a potential Saudi-Israeli normalization deal could be held up indefinitely by Netanyahu's refusal to agree to a pathway to Palestinian statehood, it was recently reported that Saudi Arabia may be pushing the U.S. to sign a limited defense pact "Plan B" which would exclude the need for Israeli approval. According to this alternative plan, the U.S. and Saudi Arabia would sign a bilateral defense agreement, and then Israel would be offered a normalization deal with Saudi Arabia in exchange for acceptance of the two-state solution.