

Genocide in Gaza: The Biden Administration's Role and Legacy

Khury Petersen-Smith and Hanna Homestead



Since October 2023, the Israeli military has unleashed the most [intensive](#) bombing campaign in recorded history on the people of [Gaza](#), creating one of the [worst](#) human-made humanitarian disasters on record. As the Biden presidency comes to a close, it leaves a legacy of direct support for Israel's genocide in the Gaza Strip, forced removal of Palestinians in the West Bank, and deadly and dangerous escalation throughout the region.

In anticipation of more support for genocidal Israeli practices under the incoming Trump administration, this fact sheet offers a summary accounting of Biden's support for Israel in this chapter of its onslaught against Palestinians. **Activists can and must continue to demand an immediate arms embargo and the delivery of humanitarian aid**, both of which are the necessary pre-conditions for any genuine ceasefire.

Our key takeaways about U.S. support for Israel under Biden include the following:

- **The U.S. is directly responsible** for enabling Israel's genocidal assault on Gaza and the ongoing forced displacement of Palestinians in the West Bank.
- **U.S. arms transfers to Israel are unlawful, unpopular, and escalating violence** rather than stopping it.
- **Rather than use negotiations to end hostilities**, the White House has provided cover for Israel's violence.
- **Changes to U.S. policy are necessary and possible.** An arms embargo, a massive influx of humanitarian assistance, and an end to U.S. protection of Israeli impunity are urgently needed to stop the genocide and build a foundation for lasting peace.

How much military aid has the U.S. approved for Israel since October 2023?

The U.S. authorized at least [\\$22.76 billion](#) in taxpayer-funded military assistance to Israel in 2024 alone.

- Israel currently receives [\\$3.8 billion](#) in U.S. aid annually. In April 2024, Congress [authorized](#) an additional \$14.1 billion in military aid. Increased U.S. operations in the region in support of Israel have cost taxpayers at least another \$4.86 billion.

How many weapons has the U.S. provided to Israel since its offensive began in Gaza in October 2023?

The U.S. provides [78 percent](#) of Israel's military arsenal, and a [record number](#) of transfers are taking place.

- As of August 2024, at least [50,000](#) tons of U.S.-made weapons and other military supplies had been delivered to Israel since October 7, 2023.

What specific types of weapons has the White House provided to Israel since October 2023, and how has Israel been using them?



U.S.-made F-15 fighter jets owned by the Israeli Air Force at Hatzetim Air Force Base, Israel. Source: Getty Images

A partial list of known weapons that the U.S. has sent or sold to Israel includes:

- [F-15 fighter jets](#), and arranged a sale for [F-35 fighter jets](#) – two types of the aircraft that Israel has used to [bomb Gaza](#), [Yemen](#), and [Lebanon](#).
- At least [3,000](#) Hellfire missiles.
- At least [57,000 155mm High Explosive artillery shells](#), with the sale of at least 50,000 [120mm High Explosive mortar cartridges](#) also approved.
- [14,000 120mm tank cartridges](#).
- At least [100](#) BLU-109 bombs and at least [14,000](#) Mk84 2,000 pound bombs.
- [1,000](#) GBU-39, 250-pound bombs. The New York Times [has called](#) the GBU-39 Israel’s “weapons of choice” for attacking Palestinians in Gaza.
- In October and November of 2023 alone, the U.S. exported [27,500 handguns](#) to Israel – more than in any entire year of the past 20 years.

Besides supplying weapons, how else has the Biden administration supported Israel?

The U.S. has provided various types of logistical, material, and political support, such as:

- **Intelligence:** The U.S. military has provided [targeting information](#) to facilitate Israeli airstrikes in Gaza.
- **Direct involvement of U.S. forces:** In [October 2023](#), [April 2024](#), and [October 2024](#), U.S. personnel and equipment intercepted missiles on behalf of Israel. Legal experts have noted the [tenuous legality](#) of this type of military engagement, which has not happened since the 1991 Gulf War and which was not approved by Congress.
- **Fuel:** The U.S. is the Israeli military’s top [source](#) of imported JP-8 jet fuel, powering military aircraft and vehicles currently being used to bombard the Gaza strip, occupied West Bank, and Lebanon.
- **Protection in the UN:** In April 2024, the U.S. used its [veto](#) to prevent Palestine’s most recent request for full UN membership, and voted against a Human Rights Council ceasefire [resolution](#). In September 2024, the U.S. voted against a [UN General Assembly](#) resolution demanding Israel end its unlawful occupation of Palestinian territory, which was overwhelmingly supported by other member states. It has [vetoed](#) four UN Security Council ceasefire resolutions, and [voted against](#) a ceasefire resolution in the General Assembly.

How do the White House's actions violate and undermine international law?

The Biden administration is undermining the International Criminal Court (ICC).

- The U.S. threatened the Court and member states to prevent the [ICC from issuing warrants](#) for the arrests of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Defense Minister Yoav Gallant.
 - After the Court issued its warrants, President Biden [said](#), “we don’t recognize their jurisdiction.”

The White House is flouting the International Court of Justice's (ICJ) ruling that Israel is violating the Genocide Convention.

- In January 2024, the ICJ [ruled](#) that Israel must “take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts” that violate the Genocide Convention.
- The ICJ’s ruling also requires that all UN member states and signatories of the Genocide Convention – of which the U.S. is both – do everything in their power to prevent or stop the genocidal acts.
- Despite this, Israel has escalated its violence in Gaza since the ruling, and the White House continues to send weapons.
- The U.S. opposed the September 2024 UN General Assembly resolution requiring all countries to stop “the provision or transfer of arms, munitions, and related equipment to Israel, the occupying Power, in all cases where there are reasonable grounds to suspect that they may be used in the Occupied Palestinian Territory.”

Israel and the U.S. are violating the Geneva Conventions.

- The Fourth Geneva Convention [states](#) that an “Occupying Power has the duty of ensuring the food and medical supplies of the population,” which Israel is refusing to provide.
- The U.S. is providing the weapons of the siege, refusing to hold Israel accountable for its violations, and refusing to pay its promised share of funding to UNRWA.

How is the White House violating U.S. law by sending weapons to Israel?

The Biden administration is violating the following U.S. laws:

- **The Arms Export Control Act**, which [states](#) that weapons can only be sent to foreign countries for internal security or legitimate self defense purposes, or in UN sanctioned activities. According to the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, and [leading human rights organizations](#), Israel’s genocide in Gaza does not meet any of these requirements.
- **The Foreign Assistance Act**, which [prohibits](#) sending weapons to “any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights” and/or to any country when the president is [aware](#) that the government “prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance.”
- **The Leahy Laws**, which [prohibit](#) supporting foreign security forces’ units that have committed a “gross violation of human rights.”

The Biden administration is also violating its own policies.

- The Biden Administration’s 2023 [Conventional Arms Transfer](#) policy explicitly states “no arms transfer will be authorized” where “it is more likely than not” that the weapons will be used by the recipient to commit human rights abuses.
- In May 2024, the State Department’s own reporting [concluded](#) that “it is reasonable to assess” that Israel’s use of U.S. arms in Gaza likely violated international law. They continued to supply weapons, however, because there are “a number of ongoing, active criminal investigations pending” and the White House is satisfied with Israel’s monitoring of its own forces.
- In October 2024, Secretary of State Blinken and Secretary of Defense Austin told Israel to take steps within 30 days to reverse its humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza. After the deadline, however, Blinken announced that there would be no change in U.S. weapons shipments and other support for Israel despite the fact that [aid groups](#) confirmed the situation had actually worsened for Palestinians over the 30 days.

How has Biden responded to Congressional efforts to hold Israel accountable for violations committed with U.S. weapons?

As the U.S. Senate prepared to vote on [Joint Resolutions of Disapproval](#) against sending some of the most destructive weapons to Israel, [Biden pressured](#) Democratic senators to vote against the resolutions.

Does the White House’s support for Israel’s genocide reflect public opinion?

No. CBS News has [reported](#) that “61 percent of all Americans said the U.S. should not send weapons to Israel, including 77 percent of Democrats and nearly 40 percent of Republicans.”

Has Biden’s approach made the Middle East safer?

No. As a result of Israel’s actions and U.S. support for them since October 2023, more than 43,000 Palestinians in Gaza had been killed as of December 2024 — and almost all of Gaza is uninhabitable. More women and children have been killed in one year than in any other conflict in [decades](#). [Ninety-six percent](#) of Gaza’s population faces acute levels of food insecurity. Palestinians have also been violently displaced from their homes in the West Bank.

U.S. actions have also prolonged the conflict. Biden’s ambassador to the UN has [vetoed](#) four separate UN Security Council ceasefire resolutions. And the White House ignored the assassination of the chief Palestinian negotiator, Ismail Haniyeh, an event that marked a massive setback for diplomacy.



Ambassador Robert Wood, Alternate Representative of the U.S. for Special Political Affairs in the UN, vetoes a draft Gaza ceasefire resolution during a UN Security Council meeting on Nov. 20, 2024. Source: Getty Images

The *New York Times* [reported](#) that Israel is building permanent military bases in Gaza with U.S. support, which directly contradicts the demand that Palestinians have raised since the beginning of ceasefire negotiations: complete withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from the territory.

In addition to the genocidal campaign in Gaza, Israel has launched attacks in the West Bank and against Lebanon, Iran, and Syria. Multiple ballistic missile and drone strikes have been exchanged between Iran and Israel. Attacks on U.S. bases in the region have also increased by the hundreds — all evidence of escalating regional violence and instability.

All this conflict comes with a climate cost, as well. The [projected emissions](#) from the first 120 days of fighting alone were greater than the annual emissions of 26 individual countries and territories — exacerbating the effects of climate change in one of the world’s most vulnerable regions.

What could the White House do to stop the siege on Palestinians, respect its own laws, and uphold international law?

The White House must take the following steps:

- Immediately suspend all weapons transfers to Israel.
- Stop attacking the ICC — and stop sanctioning its judges and staff.
- Demand that aid to Palestinians be handled by international agencies rather than Israeli forces, which have systematically denied aid to Gaza. It must remove all restrictions on UNRWA, the key UN and aid agency capable of helping Palestinians.

Conclusion

The support of genocide in Gaza — and violence throughout the Middle East — outlined above are President Biden’s legacy. But it does not need to be the legacy of our communities, our institutions, or ourselves.

The choice to support this genocide — to accept it without dissent or to resist it — is one that all of us need to make.

Each day that Biden himself and officials in his administration remain in office presents an opportunity to stop the genocide in any of the ways presented above. But regardless of what they do, we are all compelled to demand an end to the genocide, to end U.S. complicity in it, and to ensure accountability for those responsible.

Khury Petersen-Smith co-directs the New Internationalism Project at the Institute for Policy Studies (ips-dc.org). Hanna Homestead is a research analyst with the IPS National Priorities Project (nationalpriorities.org).