



JVP Backgrounder: Israel's Request for \$50 Billion in Military Aid Over Ten Years

Issue Summary

Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) urges the United States to reject Israel's reported request for \$50 billion in aid, almost all for military purposes over ten years. Israel currently receives \$3.1 billion in military aid a year and has requested a new Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) with this 62% increase.

It is unconscionable for the United States to continue giving massive amounts of military aid to Israel. U.S. taxpayer money is used to carry out a brutal and illegal military occupation while Israeli settlements continue to be approved and built in the West Bank even as U.S. policy has consistently opposed settlement expansion. The request for \$50 billion in aid over 10 years takes place at a time when U.S. infrastructure is badly in need of repair, our safety net programs are being cut, and our veterans are not properly cared for.

U.S. law commits the United States to ensure that military aid is not being used to violate human rights. There is ample evidence that Israel continues to violate the fundamental human rights of Palestinians. As a result, Jewish Voice for Peace recommends military aid to Israel be conditioned on compliance with U.S. laws regarding military aid.

Background

Israel is the largest recipient of cumulative U.S. foreign assistance since World War II. The United States has provided Israel with more than \$124 billion dollars total, including a multi-year deal entered in 2007, which provides Israel with \$30 billion over the course of ten years. Most of this aid has been military aid, in order to help Israel maintain a Qualitative Military Edge ("QME") over surrounding nations.

U.S. foreign aid to Israel includes special advantages not available to other allies, including earmarks for military research and development and the right to use U.S. aid money to purchase weapons from Israeli manufacturers.

However this considerable support comes even as Israel continues to violate Palestinian human rights, as recognized by the U.S. Department of State Country Report for 2014. As a result of these violations, which include torture, incarceration without trial, and displacement in violation of international law, U.S. citizens are increasingly concerned about the use of U.S. financial assistance in facilitating actions that both violate human rights and contravene U.S. foreign policy.

An open letter from fifteen prominent Christian leaders in 2012 (<http://bit.ly/R6JJnG>) called for a comprehensive review of U.S. military aid to Israel to ensure it is in compliance with American law. Their view, supported by Jewish Voice for Peace and many other Americans, Jewish and otherwise, is that Israel and the Palestinians must both be held to account for their actions. While Palestinians are often penalized for not living up to their agreements, only positive inducements have been offered to Israel.

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The Foreign Assistance Act of 1961, 22 U.S.C. § 2151 et seq., states: "The United States shall, in accordance with its international obligations as set forth in the Charter of the United Nations and in keeping with the constitutional heritage and traditions of the United States, promote and encourage increased respect for human rights and fundamental freedoms throughout the world.... Accordingly, a principal goal of the foreign policy of the United States shall be to promote the increased observance of internationally recognized human rights by all countries...no security assistance may be provided to any country the government of which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."

The Arms Export Control Act of 1979 22 U.S.C. § 39 further stipulates that U.S. military aid is "...solely for internal security, for legitimate self-defense, for preventing or hindering the proliferation of weapons of mass destruction and of the means of delivering such weapons..." and "...that no credits, guarantees, sales, or deliveries of weapons can be extended to a foreign country if it is in substantial violation of the narrowly limited uses of weapons cited above." The United States Congress has a responsibility to review, and when necessary, suspend aid to countries who are violating international human rights law, which there is ample evidence that Israel continues to do.

There is a precedent for withholding certain economic aid measures, specifically loan guarantees. President George H. W. Bush threatened to withhold loan guarantees over Israel's policy of expanding settlements in the West Bank. He leveraged this threat to convince Israel to attend the 1991 Madrid peace conference, which eventually led to the Oslo Accords and establishment of the Palestinian Authority in 1993. More recently, George W. Bush threatened to withhold a small portion of loan guarantees due to concerns over the route of Israel's "security barrier" in the West Bank. Though the guarantees were never withheld, the threat

altered Israel's behavior. The route of the barrier changed shortly thereafter. Thus there is evidence to suggest that conditioning U.S. aid to Israel is a potentially powerful tool to bring Israel's policies in line with U.S. interests and international human rights standards.

Considering Israel's unending settlement expansion and continued repression of Palestinians, Jewish Voice for Peace strongly recommends that any additional military aid to Israel be clearly conditioned on Israel's compliance with US law.

Policy Options

- Request a comprehensive, one-time review of Israel's compliance with U.S. laws regarding foreign military aid from the Department of State.
- Condition military aid to Israel on compliance with U.S. laws regarding foreign military aid.
- Institute a periodic comprehensive review of military aid to all countries to review compliance with U.S. law.
- Reject Israel's reported request for \$50 billion in aid over the next ten years.

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