

Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief

Intel for Advocacy

DATE: April 21, 2022

SL: [\[Guest Post\] Ending U.S. Complicity in Israeli Violence Against Palestinians](#)

The Takeaway:

- Almost one year after Israel's May 2021 military assault on Palestinians in Gaza that followed an escalation of Israeli police and military violence in East Jerusalem, including attacks on Palestinian worshippers at Al Aqsa mosque, we're seeing something very familiar happening again.
- The U.S. sends \$3.8 billion in annual military funding to the Israeli government with zero country-specific human rights conditions. In spite of the Israeli government's blatant violations of Palestinian human rights the U.S. actually increased its military funding to Israel in FY2022 by an additional \$1 billion.
- Palestinians are calling for an end to Israeli apartheid, and progressives in the U.S. — including a growing number in Congress — are taking action. It's time to translate this momentum into tangible and concrete steps to hold the Israeli government accountable.

What's Happening in Palestine, and U.S. Complicity in Israeli Violence

We bring you a special edition of the Progressive Foreign Policy Debrief, guest authored by two great advocates for Palestinian rights: Sana at the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights, and Beth Miller at Jewish Voice for Peace Action. Their work to bring about justice, accountability, and peace is crucial, and we're excited to bring you their words:

Over the last couple of weeks, Israeli violence against the Palestinian people has intensified. Last Friday, Israeli forces attacked Palestinian worshippers at one of the holiest Muslim sites during the sacred month of Ramadan, injuring more than 150 Palestinians with rubber-coated steel bullets and tear gas. Violent Israeli incursions into Al Aqsa mosque have continued over the last few days. This followed two weeks during which the Israeli military killed 13 Palestinians, including a [sixteen-year-old](#), a human rights advocate and [father](#), and a [widowed mother of six](#). Additionally, Israel bombed the Gaza Strip twice this week, and Israeli settlers attacked and brutally [beat a Palestinian-American man](#) last week.

The sharp escalation in violence undeniably mirrors the patterns we saw last year, which escalated into an 11-day Israeli assault killing 261 Palestinian people in Gaza. Several families [lost multiple generations](#), and Israeli bombings leveled homes, media buildings, and roads to

hospitals. Even with this immense loss of life, we have not seen concrete shifts in U.S. foreign policy to move us towards peace and justice.

Every single life is precious and all people — including Palestinians and Israelis — should live in safety. To get there, the root causes and broader context must be addressed. For decades, Israel has enforced an [apartheid system](#), settler colonialism, and military occupation over millions of Palestinians under which Palestinians are systematically discriminated against, forced out of their own homes, denied their most basic rights, and even killed. All with the support and complicity of the U.S.

Last year, during and following Israel's assault on the Gaza Strip, Palestinians called for a general strike and mass protests across the world, with [a core demand for international sanctions](#) — a people's arms embargo — to allow for Palestinians to live in dignity and freedom. How can we in the U.S., and specifically those of us working for a stronger and more progressive foreign policy, end U.S. complicity in Israeli violence against the Palestinian people?

U.S. Complicity: Military Funding

To start, we need a deeper understanding of the many ways the U.S. is currently supporting the Israeli government's ongoing human rights violations against Palestinians. Let's begin with the staggering amount of military funding our government sends to Israel each year.

Under a ten-year Memorandum of Understanding between the U.S. and Israel, Israel currently receives \$3.8 billion in military funding annually. Israel receives this funding in several unique ways, including that it receives its Foreign Military Financing in a lump sum with [no mechanism to track](#) which weapons go to which military unit, and with no country-specific human rights conditions.

One would hope the increasingly blatant violence of the Israeli government, coupled with the [growing demands](#) from people in the U.S. to hold the Israeli government accountable for human rights violations, might force Congress towards reducing our military support to the Israeli government. Unfortunately, the FY2022 budget saw an *increase* in our topline military spending to Israel to the highest it's ever been: \$4.8 billion. (This was in response to an Israeli government request for an additional \$1 billion for supplemental Iron Dome funding. Despite the fact that the US already funds Israel's Iron Dome system through an annual \$500 million in missile defense appropriations).

A \$1 billion increase in military funding to a government that the world's two largest human rights organizations have accused of apartheid is an abject failure of Congress and the Biden administration to live up to their stated values of human rights.

U.S. Complicity: Diplomatic support and shielding from accountability

The U.S. has also spent significant efforts shielding the Israeli government from accountability in the international arena. Just last month, during his [address](#) to the UN Human Rights Council, Secretary of State Antony Blinken recommitted the U.S. to objecting to the UNHRC's attempts

at defending Palestinian rights, including objecting to the body's Commission of Inquiry tasked with investigating the Israeli government's human rights abuses against Palestinians. Even an *investigation* into possible Israeli human rights violations is more than the U.S. is willing to stomach — a position the U.S. has [reiterated](#) in a variety of fora across presidential administrations. This kind of obstructionism is also backed by a disturbingly large percentage of [members of Congress](#).

Congress and the Biden administration have also latched onto a dangerous Trump-era policy intended to support the Israeli government and isolate Palestinians, known as the [Abraham Accords](#). While masquerading as a “peace” initiative, the Abraham Accords, and the recently passed H.R. 2748/S.1061 in support of the Abraham Accords, are actually an endorsement of arms sales and political favors between the U.S. and authoritarian regimes.

Through these deals, authoritarian regimes have procured weapons and other political favors from the U.S. and from one another. This includes U.S. recognition of Morocco's illegal annexation of the Western Sahara, occupied since 1975, and promising F-35 combat aircraft and long-range armed drones to the United Arab Emirates.

This dangerous approach to foreign policy in the Middle East harms the most vulnerable communities already subject to systematic human rights violations - from Yemenis, to Sahrawis, to Palestinians - and floods the region with more U.S. weapons.

Policy Interventions: When does accountability in U.S. foreign policy start?

Considering the Israeli government's well-documented and ongoing systematic human rights violations, at minimum Congress should take immediate steps to withhold future military funding to the Israeli government until it has halted its violence against Palestinians. The political realities of Congress being what they are, this will take time, but there are already significant steps being taken by a growing number of members of Congress.

Representative Betty McCollum's [Palestinian Children and Families Act, H.R. 2590](#), centers Palestinian rights and restricts U.S. funding from being used for the [military detention of Palestinian children](#), the [demolition and destruction](#) of Palestinian homes and property, and any further annexation of Palestinian land. It currently has 32 cosponsors and is [endorsed](#) by over 170 civil society groups, including our organizations USCPR and JVP Action, and Win Without War.

In May 2021, Representatives Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Mark Pocan, and Senator Bernie Sanders introduced [joint resolutions](#) to block a \$735 million sale of Boeing precision guided missiles to Israel—the same bombs Israel was actively using in the then-ongoing assault on Gaza. The call to stop the bombs sale was [supported](#) by over 100 organizations.

These are just two examples of a rapidly growing number of stances members of Congress are taking in response to calls from Palestinians for an end to U.S. support for Israel's ongoing human rights violations.

The path forward is clear. Any member of Congress who claims to put human rights at the center of their foreign policy should support foreign policy that ends decades of U.S. complicity — both financially and diplomatically — in Israeli violence against Palestinians.

BURIED LEDES

Recently, Rep. Norcross (D-NJ) decided to publicly [insinuate](#) that all Iranians are liars. **Our very own Executive Director Sara Haghdoosti [posits](#) that as the Biden administration continues to negotiate the JCPOA, one of the most critical diplomatic agreements made in decades, maybe people... shouldn't dehumanize Iranians while they do it?** Just a thought.

On that note, we hosted a webinar yesterday on how people can support the White House in their JCPOA revitalization efforts, moderated by Sara! **You can watch it, and find out what you can do to help, [here](#).**

As Russia continues its offensive against Ukraine, the Biden administration is looking into increased lithium production as a pathway for green energy independence. **But as this [piece](#) reminds us, when it comes to ensuring that the planet survives climate change, energy independence isn't the goal. Substantially reducing U.S. emissions is.**

We've done it before, and we'll do it again — **we're proud to have signed on to this [letter](#) calling for the White House to unfreeze Afghanistan's \$7 billion in currency reserves held in the United States.** There's still so much the United States owes to the people of Afghanistan to be accountable for twenty years of failed war. Removing the financial restrictions causing a mass humanitarian crisis is the *bare* minimum.

We appreciate the candor: In "The Unbelievable Stupidity of Ending Global Covid Aid," **Michelle Goldberg [notes](#) the consequences of the U.S. not continuing to fund covid aid packages to the rest of the world. She writes: "Our gruesomely dysfunctional politics are going to lead to more illness and death across the globe, and we're increasing the odds that a new viral mutation will once again upend American life."** She's not wrong.

For the past few weeks, **we've seen pieces of [good news](#) coming out of Yemen. Saudi Arabia allowing fuel shipments to arrive in Hudaydah. The resumption of commercial flights in and out of Sana'a.** We're glad to see the truce serving as a bit of a stabilizing force between the different parties in the war, and hope it'll hold and lead to a more long-lasting peace for the Yemeni people.

Speaking of Saudi Arabia though, **read this [piece](#) taking aim at the efficacy and morality of the United States' security relationships with the Gulf.** As Alexandra Shark puts it: "The state of the relationships themselves — rather than these strategic ends — have increasingly

become the goal of US foreign policy in the region. To put it succinctly, the means have become the ends. And that needs to change.”

As the U.S. sees yet another murder of a Black person, Patrick Lloya, at the hands of police, Mari Faines [points](#) out that **the domestic and foreign militarism reflected in the proposed FY2023 budget does not necessarily make Black and brown communities any more safe:** “There must be a moral shift in how we view our country’s safety and security. An investment in military action and weapons can’t be the only way to keep people safe.”

Finally! **The Biden administration announced its decision this week to extend Temporary Protected Status (TPS) to Cameroonian immigrants in the U.S., protecting about 40,000 people from deportation for the next 18 months.** This wouldn’t have happened without the persistent and incredible work of the [Cameroonian Advocacy Network](#), the Haitian Bridge Alliance, and others.

And lastly, **let’s end the rehabilitation of problematic politicians! Because then we’ll all get to avoid things like [this](#).**