

US Senate overwhelmingly rejects resolutions to block weapons shipments to Israel

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On Wednesday, the US Senate affirmed its support for the Israeli genocide in Gaza, which has killed and injured over 300,000 people since October 7, 2023, and roundly rejected a series of resolutions aimed at blocking a fraction of a \$20 billion war package the Biden administration approved for Israel in August.

The resolutions, spearheaded by Vermont Senator Bernie Sanders, are known as the Joint Resolutions of Disapproval, or JRDs. Wednesday's vote, while a foregone conclusion, was the first time the US Senate has ever considered blocking arms transfers to Israel in over 76 years of political, military and economic support.

Not a single one of the resolutions garnered more than 19 votes, with a majority of Democratic senators and every single Republican voting overwhelmingly against all of the resolutions presented.

Underscoring the Democratic Party's resolute support for ethnic cleansing, the day before the votes were held the Biden administration sent out a memorandum urging senators not to block the weapons sales, with the implication that voting in favor of the resolutions was tantamount to supporting terrorists. "Disapproving arms purchases for Israel at this moment would ... put wind in the sails of Iran, Hezbollah, and Hamas at the worst possible moment," the document read, according to a report from the *Huffington Post*.

Refuting months of lies from Biden, Harris and New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez that the Democratic administration was working "tirelessly" towards a ceasefire, the document continued, "Now is the time to focus pressure on Hamas to release the hostages and stop the war. ... Cutting off arms from Israel would put this goal even further out of reach and prolong the war, not shorten it."

Under the Arms Export Control Act, any US senator can submit a JRD to block the transfer of already approved weapons sales if the weapons are being sent to a country that is engaged in war crimes or blocking the transfer of US humanitarian aid to civilians. Earlier this year, in between campaigning for Vice President Kamala Harris and defending President Joe Biden's record of war and austerity, Sanders began the process of issuing the JRDs. He was supported in these efforts by Democratic Senators Jeff Merkley (Oregon), Chris Van Hollen (Maryland) and Peter Welch (Vermont).

Prior to the vote, all of the senators backing the JRDs, including Sanders, were very clear that the resolutions would not prevent the transfer of so-called "defensive" weapons systems to Israel, such as air-to-air missiles for the Iron Dome and David's Sling missile systems. Similarly, all of the senators, including Sanders, who spoke in favor of the resolutions made clear their support for the Israeli government and its alleged "right to defend" itself from Hamas.

"As I have said many many times," Sanders stated, "Israel had the absolute right to respond to that horrific Hamas attack as any other country would. I don't think anyone here in the United States Senate disagrees with that."

According to the United Nations, since 1947, Israel has illegally annexed and occupied Palestinian lands, forfeiting any right to "self-defense."

In his remarks Wednesday, Sanders never once referred to the Israelis' military campaign as genocide or ethnic cleansing. Like the other senators who supported the measure, he exclusively blamed the "Netanyahu government," while ignoring the Biden administration and his own role in perpetuating the

slaughter. In an attempt to present the current Zionist regime as an aberration from previous Zionist leaders, Sanders declared, “The Israel of today is not the Israel of Golda Meir...”

Speaking as an agent of imperialism, the Vermont senator observed that US complicity in Israel’s military campaign undercut “humanitarian” arguments advanced by US politicians to justify military interventions around the globe.

“I’ve heard well-founded concerns about China’s brutal reception of the Uyghur ethnic minority,” Sanders said. “I’ve heard rightful outrage about Putin’s brutal attacks against Ukraine and bombing of civilian installations. I’ve heard genuine concerns about Iran’s outrageous crackdown on peaceful protesters.

But what I want to say to all those folks, nobody is going to take anything you say with a grain of seriousness. You cannot condemn human rights around the world and then turn a blind eye to what the United States government is now funding in Israel. People will laugh in your face. They will say, ‘You are concerned about China, you are concerned about Russia, you are concerned about Iran, well, why are you funding the starvation of children in Gaza right now?’

“So,” Sanders concluded, “we must pass the resolutions from a legal perspective ... for our own best foreign policy interests. We will lose our credibility on the world stage.”

Senator Peter Welch also spoke in favor of the resolutions as a means of advancing US geopolitical interests in the region. He said that blocking them would “harm our goals for the Jewish democratic state ... a secured democratic independent Israel” and a “disarmed Palestinian state.”

The three Senate resolutions, 111, 113 and 115, under consideration Wednesday would only block under \$1.1 billion of the \$20 billion package. Each of the resolutions focused on so-called “offensive weapons.” These include tens of thousands of tank rounds, mortar shells and joint direct attack munitions (JDAMs),

which convert unguided “dumb” bombs into so-called “precision” munitions.

Resolutions focused on blocking transfer of tactical vehicles (\$583.1 million), F-15 fighter aircraft and upgrades (\$18.82 billion) and anti-jamming technology for GPS receivers were not considered.

During the debate session, several Democrats spoke in opposition to all of the resolutions. Nevada Senator Jacky Rosen (Democrat) claimed that if the US did not provide the GPS-guided bombs, more civilians would be killed. “By providing Israel with these weapons which are more precise and more accurate,” she claimed, “you can reduce civilian casualties.”

The chairman of the Foreign Relations Committee, Senator Ben Cardin (Democrat-Maryland), lamented, “Why isn’t there more focus on the terrorists?”

Republican warhawk and Trump ally, South Carolina Senator Lindsey Graham, joined the majority in voting against the resolution and blamed Hamas for using “their own people as human shields.”

The same day the Senate rejected any slowdown in weapons shipments to Israel, the US also vetoed a resolution at the UN calling for an “immediate, unconditional and permanent ceasefire.”

Both votes demonstrate that American imperialism’s support for the ongoing genocide is absolute and unconditional. The Biden administration, with the support of both the Democrats and the Republicans, has armed and financed the genocide as part of an escalating global war, in the Middle East and beyond.

Sanders’ shabby maneuver in the Senate was aimed at providing cover for this bipartisan ruling class policy.



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