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The US Must Stop Arming Israel



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

In a shameful moment for U.S. history, an accused war criminal addressed Congress on July 24.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to plead for more arms for his war on Gaza, where the International Court of Justice has found it “plausible” that Israel is committing genocide. “Give us the tools faster and we’ll finish the job faster,” Netanyahu said.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking a warrant for Netanyahu’s arrest for war crimes and crimes against humanity. But instead of arresting him, Congress gave him multiple standing ovations.

Beyond applause, the U.S. government is also Israel's chief supplier of arms. Every year, Congress sends billions in military aid — including thousands of high powered explosives and other weapons since October.

To avoid complicity in war crimes and genocide, these shipments must end.

There is overwhelming evidence that Israeli forces under Netanyahu's leadership have committed massive human rights atrocities against Palestinians in Gaza. And that's against the backdrop of an illegal military occupation of Palestinian territory and apartheid, as another ICJ ruling confirmed recently.

Nonetheless, Congress invited Netanyahu to speak. He used this platform to deny any responsibility for the slaughter, famine, and catastrophic destruction in Gaza — and to denigrate Americans who are rightly horrified by their government's support for his genocidal campaign.

As Netanyahu spoke, thousands of people took to the streets near the Capitol. Braving tear gas and arrest, they gave voice to the majority of Americans who demand an immediate, permanent ceasefire in Gaza and an embargo on arms to Israel.

Most Americans are disgusted that U.S-made bombs keep turning up at massacre after massacre. Over the past few weeks alone, Israel has repeatedly bombed so-called “safe zones” and at least eight schools in Gaza where thousands of forcibly displaced Palestinians were sheltering.

On July 9, the Israeli military murdered at least 30 Palestinians who were playing soccer at the Al-Awda school using GBU-39 bombs made by Boeing. Israel also dropped GBU-39s on another UN school-turned-shelter in the Nuseirat refugee camp on July 6, killing at least 40, and before that on Palestinian families sheltering in plastic tents during the May 26 Rafah massacre.

On July 13, Israeli forces killed 90 people and injured hundreds more at the Al-Mawasi refugee camp that Israel had designated a “safe zone.” Children were reportedly found “in pieces.” Eight 2,000-pound bombs turned the civilian area into a “smoldering crater.” At least one of the munitions was a Boeing-made JDAM.

Despite these atrocities, the weapons continue to flow.

In May, President Biden announced that he would pause the delivery of 2,000-pound bombs ahead of Israel's invasion of Rafah, which Biden had called “a red line.” However, Israel has still received destructive 500-pound bomb shipments despite invading Rafah, and the killing in Gaza continues.

These weapons shipments violate both international and U.S. law. The United States is legally obligated to withhold military assistance when U.S. weapons are used to violate human rights.

The UN Human Rights Council and various experts have called on all countries to end the sale and transfer of military equipment to Israel — or else risk complicity in crimes, including genocide. They called on arms manufacturers supplying Israel to do the same, including Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman.

Polls show that a majority of Americans support closing the arms pipeline to Israel. In advance of Netanyahu's speech, seven major labor unions representing nearly 6 million workers called on President Biden to “immediately halt all military aid to Israel.”

The voices of the American people deserve more respect in Congress than Netanyahu's lies and demands. An immediate end to all U.S. weapons transfers to Israel is long overdue, alongside a permanent ceasefire and larger pursuit of freedom and justice for the Palestinian people.

We must not allow ourselves to become a nation that applauds mass murder.

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