

# Biden's Legacy Should be Forever Haunted by the Names of Gaza's Dead Children

Biden's support for the terror bombing of Gaza continues his long history as a steadfast supporter of Israel's greatest crimes.

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*As Israel intensified its attacks on Gaza last week, including strikes against multiple hospitals, and presided over a forced [exodus](#) of hundreds of thousands of civilians from their homes, President Joe Biden was asked about the chances of a Gaza ceasefire. "None," Biden shot back. "No possibility."*

With a death toll that has now surpassed 11,000 Palestinians, including nearly 5,000 children, the extent of Biden's public divergence from his "great, great friend" Benjamin Netanyahu's scorched-earth war of annihilation amounts to meekly worded suggestions of "humanitarian pauses."

On Friday, Secretary of State Antony Blinken remarked,

"far too many Palestinians have been killed; far too many have suffered these past weeks, and we want to do everything possible to prevent harm to them and to maximize the assistance that gets to them."

These disingenuous platitudes melt into a puddle of blood when juxtaposed with the administration's actions.

The Biden administration has funneled weapons, intelligence support, and unwavering political backing for Israel's public campaign to erase from the earth Gaza's existence as a Palestinian territory. As Israeli settlers wage [campaigns of terror](#) against the Palestinians in the West Bank, the U.S. remained entrenched in its global isolation, voting last week against a U.N. resolution demanding an end to the illegal settlements. The resolution condemned illegal Israeli settlements, calling them "illegal and an obstacle to peace." The [resolution](#), which passed 145-7, called for "the immediate and complete cessation of all Israeli

settlement activities in all of the Occupied Palestinian Territory.” Only five countries joined the U.S. and Israel in voting “no”: Canada, Hungary, the Marshall Islands, Micronesia, and Nauru.

As the capitals of major world cities have seen [massive protests on a scale](#) not registered since the 2003 Iraq invasion, Netanyahu has been on a U.S. media blitz, appearing on Sunday talk shows to cast the stakes of his war “to destroy Hamas” as akin to World War II. “Without it none of us have a future. And it’s not only our war, it’s your war too. It’s the battle of civilization against barbarism,” he [said](#) on CNN’s “State of the Union.” “And if we don’t win here, this scourge will pass. The Middle East will pass to other places. The Middle East will fall. Europe is next. You will be next.”

Netanyahu has brazenly [exploited the grief of Israeli citizens](#) whose lives were torn apart on October 7 when Hamas launched a series of coordinated attacks inside Israel. Those raids [resulted](#) in the deaths of 846 civilians, 278 Israeli soldiers, and 44 police officers, according to the latest figures provided by Israel.

Some family members of the victims, as well as relatives of the 240 hostages taken by Hamas and other militant groups — among them infants and the elderly — have emerged as some of the most [vocal critics](#) of Netanyahu’s government. A small number have spoken out against his attacks on Gaza, though their voices are largely drowned out by pro-war voices in Western media coverage.

“I beg you, I beg also my government, and the pilots and soldiers, who may be called to go into Gaza. Don’t agree. Protect the area around the Gaza Strip, but don’t agree to go in and kill innocent people,” [said](#) Noy Katsman, whose older brother Hayim was killed on October 7 at the kibbutz he had lived on for a decade. Maoz Inon’s parents were also killed that day. “Today, Israel is repeating an old mistake it made many times in the last century. We must stop it,” Inon [wrote](#). “Revenge is not going to bring my parents back to life. It is not going to bring back other Israelis and Palestinians killed either. It is going to do the opposite. It is going to cause more casualties. It is going to bring more death.”

Over the past month, Biden has [cast doubt](#) on the [extent of Palestinian civilian deaths](#), defended Netanyahu’s violent extremist agendas, and made clear that the U.S. position amounts to this: collectively punishing Palestinians for the actions of Hamas falls under the doctrine of “self-defense.” Biden has stood by Israel as government officials have openly [described](#) an agenda of ethnically cleansing Palestinians, [proclaiming](#) a “Gaza Nakba,” [threatening](#) to do to Beirut what Israel has done to Gaza, [labeling](#) hospitals and ambulances “legitimate military targets,” and [accusing](#) U.N. workers of being Hamas and journalists of [being](#) “accomplices in crimes against humanity.” More than 100 U.N. workers and at least 40 journalists and media workers have been killed in Gaza since October 7. Approximately one in 200 Palestinians have died in Gaza since the start of Israel’s attacks.

“We are now actually rolling out the Gaza Nakba,” says Avi Dichter, Israel’s Minister for Agriculture and former head of Shin Bet.

[pic.twitter.com/idUA5InnP](https://pic.twitter.com/idUA5InnP)

— Hanno Hauenstein (@hahauenstein) [November 11, 2023](#)

National security adviser Jake Sullivan, when [asked](#) Sunday on CNN if Israel is abiding by the rules of war, replied,

“I’m not going to sit here and play judge or jury on that question. What I’m going to do is state the principle of the United States on this issue, which is straight forward: Israel has a right, indeed a responsibility, to defend itself against a terrorist group.”

DANA BASH: "Is Israel operating according to the rules of war?"

JAKE SULLIVAN: "Well, Dana, I'm not going to sit here and play judge or jury on that question." [pic.twitter.com/tfnjRBz352](https://pic.twitter.com/tfnjRBz352)

— Waleed Shahid 🇵🇸 (@\_waleedshahid) [November 12, 2023](#)

The U.S. is simultaneously increasing the flow of weapons to Israel — and Biden proposed \$14.5 billion in [additional](#) military assistance — while its senior national security official cannot state whether Israel is conducting operations in contravention of international law.

Keenly aware of the growing opposition to Israel’s war at home and abroad, and [even within](#) his own [administration](#), Biden and his advisers have sought to push a narrative that they are seeking to moderate Israel’s tactics. They make sure the U.S. press know that Biden had urged against a full-scale ground invasion, proposed limited pauses to the bombing, and expressed concerns about the humanitarian crisis for Palestinian civilians. On Monday, after days of relentless Israeli attacks on Gazan hospitals and desperate pleas from international doctors and health and aid organizations, Biden finally addressed the issue, but only after being [directly](#) asked.

“Hospitals must be protected,” he [said](#) in response to a question from the press. “My hope and expectation is that there will be less intrusive action relative to hospitals.”

The White House’s mounting effort to spin itself as being concerned about civilian deaths and doing all it can to urge Israel to avoid massacring civilians on an industrial scale is an effort to obfuscate the U.S. role as Israel’s central ally enabling this slaughter. It is a grotesque parlor game that only works if facts and history don’t matter. And in Biden’s case, that history is extensive.



Students, teachers, and Palestine solidarity allies call for a ceasefire between Hamas and Israel during a student walkout in Manhattan on Nov. 9, 2023. Photo: Pacific Press/LightRocket via Getty Images

## Support for Israel's Wars

For 50 years, Biden has been consistent in his support for Israel's wars against the Palestinians. Time and again he has backed and facilitated campaigns of terror waged by a nuclear power against a [people who have no state, no army, no air force, no navy, and an almost nonexistent civilian infrastructure](#). As Gaza burns in a smoldering pyre of death and destruction, 80-year-old Biden may be overseeing the final act in his devotion to Israel's most extreme agenda. His legacy should be forever haunted by the names of the dead children of Gaza, thousands of whom have died in a matter of weeks under the hellfire of U.S.-manufactured weapons and support.

Biden has been in public office longer than almost any U.S. politician in history. His career in the U.S. Senate began on the eve of the 1973 Arab-Israeli war when he traveled to meet Israeli Prime Minister Golda Meir.

"I sat across the desk for an hour as she flipped those maps up and down, chain smoking, telling me about the [1967] Six Day War," Biden said. He called it "one of the most consequential meetings I've ever had in my life."

But, as has been in the case with more than a few of Biden's vignettes about his central role in historical events, in his numerous and varied retelling of that story, he seems to have [exaggerated](#) how important that meeting was to Meir and the Israelis.

Over the ensuing decades and up to the current horrors being inflicted on the people of Gaza, Biden has operated as one of the staunchest promoters of Israel's colonialist agenda, often defending Israel's disproportionate use of force, collective punishment, and at times

outright massacres.

“Were there not an Israel, the United States would have to invent an Israel to protect her interests in the region,” Biden said on the Senate floor in 1986.

He [repeated](#) that same line earlier this year during a July visit by Israeli President Isaac Herzog to Washington. During Biden’s trip to Israel last month, as Israel intensified its attacks on Gaza and the civilian death toll skyrocketed, he [told](#) Netanyahu and his war cabinet,

“I don’t believe you have to be a Jew to be a Zionist, and I am a Zionist.”

Building support for Israel’s military might and funneling money and political support to Israel has been a central component of Biden’s career-long foreign policy agenda. He is fond of calling himself “Israel’s best Catholic friend.” In 2016, during a visit to Israel, Netanyahu heaped praise on Biden, then vice president.

“The people of Israel consider the Biden family part of our family,” he [said](#). “I want to thank you personally for your, for our personal friendship of over 30 years. We’ve known each other a long time. We’ve gone through many trials and tribulations. And we have an enduring bond that represents the enduring bond between our people.”

There is one story from these decades of Biden’s dedication to Israel that seems eerily prescient given the bloodbath playing out in Gaza right now. It took place early in the Israeli invasion of Lebanon in 1982. In public, Biden was neither a cheerleader for the invasion nor an opponent. But in a private meeting of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee with Prime Minister Menachem Begin in June 1982, Biden’s support for the brutality of the invasion appeared to outstrip even that of the Israeli government.

As the [Israeli prime minister was grilled](#) in the Senate over Israel’s disproportionate use of force, including the targeting of civilians with cluster bomb munitions, Biden, in Begin’s words, “rose and delivered a very impassioned speech” defending the invasion. Upon his return to Israel, Begin told Israeli reporters he was shocked when Biden “said he would go even further than Israel, adding that he’d forcefully fend off anyone who sought to invade his country, even if that meant killing women or children.” Begin said,

“I disassociated myself from these remarks,” adding, “I said to him: No, sir; attention must be paid. According to our values, it is forbidden to hurt women and children, even in war. Sometimes there are casualties among the civilian population as well. But it is forbidden to aspire to this. This is a yardstick of human civilization, not to hurt civilians.”

Coming from Begin, the comments were striking, because he had been notorious as a leader of the Irgun, a militant group that carried out some of the worst acts of ethnic cleansing accompanying the creation of the state of Israel, including the 1948 Deir Yassin massacre. The details of his exchange with Biden about Lebanon did not receive attention in the U.S. press. Instead, the New York Times focused on what it [termed](#) the “bitterest exchange” between Biden and Begin over the issue of Israeli settlements, which Biden opposed because, he said, it was hurting Israel’s reputation in the U.S. “He hinted — more than hinted — that if we continue with this policy, it is possible that he will propose cutting our financial aid,” Begin alleged.

Over the years, Biden has referenced this confrontation when explaining his opposition to

the expansion of [Israeli settlements](#) in the [West Bank](#) as a disagreement among very good friends. Biden has long [argued](#) that these expansions undermine prospects for a peace agreement between Israel and the Palestinians, though his rhetoric has often been contradicted by his actions, as was the case with his opposition to last week's U.N. vote labeling the settlements illegal.

## “Innocents Got Killed”

Image: U.S. Vice President Joe Biden speaks at the American Israel Public Affairs Committee's annual policy conference in Washington, D.C., on May 5, 2009. Photo: Saul Loeb/AFP via Getty Images



In the 1990s, as Biden solidified his reputation as a top foreign policy senator, he often helped shepherd legislation and funding packages to Israel that human rights groups and international aid organizations said would hinder efforts at brokering lasting peace and further entrench the state of apartheid imposed on millions of Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza.

Biden was an early proponent of moving the U.S. Embassy in Israel to Jerusalem, a move that finally took place in [2018 under the Trump administration](#). In 1995, Biden helped pass a Senate resolution demanding that the embassy be moved by May of that year. Despite objections that it would harm ongoing Israeli-Palestinian peace talks by deciding a key issue by fiat, Biden said the move would send a positive signal to the region.

“To do less would play into the hands of those who would do their hardest to deny Israel the full attributes of statehood,” Biden said.

In 2001, following rare public criticism from the Bush administration [directed](#) at Israel's policy of assassinating suspected Palestinian militants, Biden defended Israel's right to carry out such killings and even rebuked President George W. Bush for criticizing them.

“My view has always been that disagreements between Israel and the United States, those differences should be aired privately, not publicly,” Biden said.

He also defended the legality of targeted killings, which at the time were considered highly questionable by legal experts for occurring outside a declared conflict.

“I don't believe this is a policy of assassinations,” Biden said, referring to the targeting of suspected Hamas members. “There is in effect a declared war, a declaration by an organization that has said its goal is to do as much as it can to kill Israeli civilians.”

In [July 2006](#), Israel was bombing both Gaza and southern Lebanon, with Biden cheering it on. The Israelis, Biden said on MSNBC, “have in both cases, both in Gaza and in southern Lebanon, done the right thing.” In the face of international condemnations of Israel’s brutality in its attacks, Biden defended Israel.

“I find it fascinating — people talk about, ‘Has Israel gone too far?’ No one talks about whether Israel’s justified in the first place,” he said on “Meet the Press.” Unless critics of Israel recognize that it was a victim of terrorism, he said, “I think it’s awful — I think it’s a secondary question whether Israel’s gone too far.”

Biden said his “only criticism of the Israelis is they’re not that great at public relations.” He compared Israel’s attacks on Gaza and Lebanon to the U.S. [invasion and occupation](#) of Afghanistan after the September 11 attacks.

“It’s a little bit like the same thing we had when we went into Afghanistan,” Biden said at a press conference in July 2006. “We went into Afghanistan, remember, we took out a wedding party by accident? Remember, we took out — with these very sophisticated missiles we had, we accidentally killed some citizens? Was ever a war more justified than us going into Afghanistan? I can’t think of any war since World War II more justified. Yet innocents got killed in us trying to protect America’s interests.”

By August 2006, more than 1,000 people were killed in Israel’s war against Lebanon, and UNICEF [estimated](#) that 30 percent of the casualties were children.

During his time as vice president, Biden often played the role of placating his friend Netanyahu who famously loathed President Barack Obama. During those eight years, Obama largely maintained long-standing U.S. posture of showering Israel with weapons and other aid despite repeated political spats with Netanyahu, most prominently over Iran and Israeli settlements. During numerous episodes when Israel unleashed gratuitous violence, drawing international condemnation, Biden served as Israel’s most prominent American defender.

In the early summer of 2010, a group of mostly Turkish activists attempted to deliver a flotilla of humanitarian aid to the besieged Gaza Strip. The attempt was interdicted by the Israeli military, which launched a raid on one ship that resulted in the deaths of nine people, including one American citizen. The raid triggered an international outcry and led to a diplomatic crisis between Israel and Turkey, while drawing further attention to the civilian impact of the ongoing Israeli siege of Gaza.

Biden took the lead in defending the raid to the U.S. public. In an interview with PBS, he [described](#) the raid as “legitimate” and argued that the flotilla organizers could have disembarked elsewhere before transferring the aid to Gaza.

“So what’s the big deal here? What’s the big deal of insisting it go straight to Gaza?” Biden asked about the humanitarian mission. “Well, it’s legitimate for Israel to say, ‘I don’t know what’s on that ship. These guys are dropping eight — 3,000 rockets on my people.’”

No weapons were ever found on the ship, only humanitarian supplies. Amid the fury that the raid generated and the muted response from Obama, Biden’s remarks were [welcomed](#) by [AIPAC](#) spokesperson Josh Block, who said at the time,

“We appreciate the many strong statements of support for Israel from members of Congress and the vice president today.”

After the 2014 Gaza war — a seven-week Israeli ground invasion that killed more than 2,000 Palestinians (two-thirds of them civilians) and caused widespread displacement and destruction of civilian infrastructure — Biden boasted of how the Obama administration had “steadfastly stood before the world and defended Israel’s right to defend itself,” [declaring](#),

“We have an obligation to match the steel and the spine of the people of Israel with an ironclad, nonnegotiable commitment to Israel’s physical security.”

In May 2021, a few months into Biden’s presidency, Israel intensified its ethnic-cleansing campaign against Palestinians in East Jerusalem, [forcibly evicting](#) people from their homes to hand them over to [Israeli settlers](#). The incendiary situation was then exacerbated during a Ramadan siege by [Israeli forces](#) at one of the [holiest sites in Islam](#), Al Aqsa mosque in Jerusalem. In response, Hamas began launching rockets into Israel. Netanyahu retaliated by ordering a massive 11-day bombing campaign against Gaza, striking residential buildings, [media outlets](#), hospitals, and a refugee camp.

As the civilian death toll among Palestinians began to rise, Ned Price, the State Department spokesperson, characterized the operation as Israel exercising its right to self-defense. When he was then asked whether the principle of self-defense also applied to Palestinians, he struggled to answer before saying,

“Broadly speaking, we believe in the concept of self-defense. We believe it applies to any state.”

When Matt Lee of The Associated Press pointed out that Palestinians do not have a state, Price said,

“I’m not in a position to debate the legalities from up here.”

More than 250 Palestinians died during Israel’s siege, including dozens of children. More than 70,000 Palestinians were displaced. Throughout the bombing, the U.S. staunchly defended Israel’s disproportionate attacks, with Biden [declaring](#) on May 16, “there has not been a significant overreaction” from Israel before pivoting to condemn Hamas’s firing of rockets into civilian areas of Israel.





Displaced Palestinians at Nassr hospital try to feed their children during food shortages on Nov. 8, 2023.

Photo: Abed Zagout/Anadolu via Getty Images

## Evidence of Genocidal Intent

Following Hamas's horrifying attacks on October 7, Biden and his administration have defended Israel's mass bombardment of Gaza, and U.S. weapons [shipments](#) have been accelerated. Biden [called](#) his proposal for additional military support an "unprecedented commitment to Israel's security that will sharpen Israel's qualitative military edge," saying, "We're going to make sure other hostile actors in the region know that Israel is stronger than ever."

This crisis has undoubtedly solidified Biden's legacy as one of the premiere American defenders of Israel's crimes, including disproportionate attacks against an overwhelmingly defenseless civilian population, in the history of U.S. politics.

In an alternate reality — one where the rule of law is applied equally to all states — Israeli leaders would likely face war crimes charges for the razing of Gaza. Leading genocide scholars and [international law experts](#) have [cited](#) the statements of Israeli officials about the aims of their operations in Gaza as potential evidence of "genocidal intent." A coalition of international lawyers representing Palestinian rights groups has already [petitioned](#) the International Criminal Court to open a criminal inquiry and issue arrest warrants for Netanyahu and other officials.

Such attempts at accountability should not focus solely on Israeli leaders, according to some U.S. constitutional law organizations. The U.S. is Israel's premiere bankroller and arms dealer, not to mention its political defender. There are several U.S. laws and treaties that prohibit support for, and failure to prevent, genocidal activities. Among these is the [Genocide Convention Implementation Act](#), signed into law in 1988. Its [sponsor](#)? A senator named Joe Biden.

On Monday, the Center for Constitutional Rights [filed](#) a federal lawsuit on behalf of Palestinians in Gaza seeking to block the Biden administration [from providing further military aid to Israel](#). The suit names Biden, Blinken, and Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin.

“They have continued to provide both military and political support for Israel’s unfolding genocidal campaign while imposing no red lines,” said Katherine Gallagher, one of the lawyers who filed the case. “The United States has a clear and binding obligation to prevent, not further, genocide. They have failed in meeting their legal and moral duty to use their considerable power to end this horror. They must do so.”

It is unfathomable, given the current world order, that any meaningful legal accountability will be served on U.S. or Israeli leaders. But on a moral level, it is important to remember these legal efforts to confront the slaughter and the complicity of Biden and other Western leaders. The U.S.-enabled horrors of the past five weeks should remain a bloody, permanent stain on the fabric of Biden’s political career and legacy. Among the U.S. political elite, it will simply be noted as Biden doing his job.

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