

# Biden Administration Continues Unwavering Support for Israel

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*Despite soaring fatalities, massive devastation and rising famine in Gaza, the Biden administration continues to arm and protect Israel from criticism and condemnation. The US claims its UN Security Council resolution is aimed at getting Hamas to agree to a ceasefire, captive swap, massive injection of humanitarian aid into Gaza as a first step in halting Israel's war and proceeding toward the "two-state solution" of a Palestinian state alongside Israel. Hamas has welcomed the resolution, but Israel insists that the war will continue until Hamas is eliminated. It remains to be seen if the Biden administration will exert pressure on Israeli Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu to abide by the resolution.*

Israel believes it can treat Gaza as it pleases without repercussions from the US, the sole global power capable of leveraging Israel to do so. Due to its refusal to rein in Israel so far, the administration has become complicit in Israel's alleged war crimes, including abuses of children.

On June 7, the anniversary of the launch of the eight-month war, UN **Secretary General Antonio Guterres** added Israel to the "blacklist" of countries that harm children during armed conflict, joining Somalia, Myanmar, Afghanistan, Nigeria and others. Israel's UN ambassador Gilad Erdan called this a "shameful decision" which is "outrageous and wrong". He said the Israeli army "is the most moral in the world". Israeli leaders await warrants from the International Criminal Court for alleged war crimes in Gaza while the International Court of Justice is examining charges that Israel as a country is committing genocide in Gaza.

Nearly 37,000 Palestinians have been killed, including more than 15,500 children, according to Gaza's media office. At least 8,000 Gazans remain missing, most believed to be under the rubble of buildings brought down by US super-bombs dropped by Israeli warplanes.

Writing in the Israeli liberal daily Haaretz, columnist Gideon Levy cited UNICEF, the UN children's agency, as reporting that 17,000 children "have lost at least one of their parents; 3,000 have lost as least one limb. Nine out of ten children in the Gaza Strip suffer from 'acute nutritional deficiency'".

The lack of nutritional food has been caused by Israeli limitations on the entry of clean water, food, medicine and fuel supplies. The US-funded Famine Early Warning Network (FEWS NET) said it is "possible but not likely" than famine was taking place in northern Gaza as early as April but was impossible to document because of hostilities. FEWS NET said that Palestinians living in Rafah and the south are also suffering from the disruption of supplies because the main crossing from Egypt for humanitarian goods has been closed since Israel mounted its Rafah offensive on May 6.

Instead of insisting Israel open multiple crossings and flood Gaza with food, medical supplies and fuel to power hospitals, de-salination plants and sewage facilities, President Joe Biden opted for the sea corridor between the Cypriot port of Larnaca and Gaza. He ordered the US military to install a massive floating pier complex off the coast of Gaza. This is meant to receive ships carrying 90-150 lorry loads of essential supplies daily to aid agencies operating in Gaza. This is far below the essential 500-600 daily loads to rescue Gaza's children and their starving families.

In its initial days of operation, the project delivered 569 tonnes of aid but none of this quickly reached Gazans in need. A reporter for The Economist Gregg Carlstrom posted on X, "The pier took two months and \$320 million to build, lasted 12 days, and delivered less than 60 trucks' worth of food" before it broke.

The pier connected to Gaza was swept away and damaged by a rough sea. The pieces were saved and towed to Israel's Ashdod Port where the pier was repaired and returned to the Gaza shore, allowing for the flow of aid to commence. However, the World Food Programme (WFP) chief Cindy McCain, a Biden appointee — said the agency had "paused" its distribution of aid entering from the pier project because of insecurity onshore.

Her decision followed Israel's military June 8th operation to free four Israeli hostages which killed 274 Gazans, wounded nearly 900 and levelled areas of Nuseirat refugee camp. She said WFP warehouses had been "rocketed" and a staff member injured. This amounts to another setback for Biden's pet project which was never going to bring enough food and medicine to Gaza's hungry, frightened children.

The destruction of the strip's healthcare system means that children are not receiving care to recover from injuries, starvation and mental distress. Malnutrition causes both physical and mental stunting while unaddressed trauma can create lifelong mental illness and depression.

Last week, UNICEF said Gaza is among the worst places in the world for children. The agency reported that severe malnutrition has had a "catastrophic impact" on 90 per cent of Gaza's infants and toddlers and their families. By March, the population of 2.3 million suffered from "high levels of acute food insecurity, with half the population expected to face catastrophic conditions" next month.

A joint document from the UN's Food and Agriculture Organisation (FAO) and the WFP warned that unless hostilities halt, relief agencies gain full access, assistance is stepped up,

and essential services are restored, “over a million people, half the population of Gaza, are expected to face death and starvation by mid-July.” Gaza and Sudan head the list of the world’s critical hunger “hotspots”.

FAO Director QU Dongyu said, “Acting ahead of crises can save lives, reduce food shortages and protect livelihoods at a much lower cost than a not timely humanitarian response.”

McCain stated, “Once a famine is declared, it is too late, many people will have already starved to death. In 2011 in Somalia, half of the 250,000 people “who died of hunger perished before famine was officially declared. The world failed to heed the warnings at the time”. McCain added, “We have proven solutions to stop these crises in their tracks, but we need the resources and the political will to implement them at scale before more lives are lost.”

Let us see whether the Biden administration has the courage and political will to ensure that Israel agrees to and implements the US Security Council resolution.

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*Featured image: President Joe Biden participates in a restricted bilateral meeting with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu at the Hotel Kempinski in Tel Aviv, Israel, Wednesday, October 18, 2023. (Official White House Photo by Cameron Smith)*

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