

The U.S. Role in Supporting Israel's Actions Against Palestinians: A Crime Against Humanity?

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The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most enduring and deeply rooted political and humanitarian crises in the world. For decades, Palestinians have faced occupation, displacement, and violence at the hands of Israeli forces, a situation that many, including legal scholars and human rights advocates, have characterized as bordering on, if not amounting to, genocide. As Israel's closest ally, the United States has provided extensive financial, military, and diplomatic support to Israel. This relationship has led to accusations that the U.S. is complicit in crimes against humanity, particularly the ongoing violence and human rights abuses inflicted upon the Palestinian people.

The U.S.-Israel Alliance: A Strategic Partnership

Since Israel's founding in 1948, the U.S. has been its most significant international ally, a relationship built on shared geopolitical interests, strategic goals in the Middle East, and historical narratives rooted in post-World War II alliances. This bond has resulted in unprecedented U.S. support for Israel, particularly in the form of military aid, with the U.S. providing over \$3.8 billion annually in military assistance since 2016 through a 10-year memorandum of understanding (MOU). This aid includes advanced weaponry, missile defense systems, and intelligence-sharing, making Israel's military one of the most formidable in the world.

While such assistance is framed as a means of ensuring Israel's security in a volatile region, critics argue that it has enabled, if not directly facilitated, the country's aggressive policies toward Palestinians. The U.S. not only provides military aid but also shields Israel from international condemnation, often vetoing U.N. Security Council resolutions critical of Israeli actions. This unwavering support has contributed to a sense of impunity in Israel, allowing it to continue its occupation of Palestinian territories, engage in military operations in Gaza, and expand illegal settlements in the West Bank, actions that violate international law.

Human Rights Violations and Allegations of Genocide

The term "genocide" is not used lightly, but many analysts and human rights organizations have pointed to elements of Israel's treatment of Palestinians that fit the criteria outlined in the 1948 United Nations Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide. The convention defines genocide as acts "committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group."

The Israeli government's policies of systematic displacement, forced evictions, demolition of Palestinian homes, and the military blockade of Gaza have created conditions that many

argue are aimed at the destruction of the Palestinian people's ability to live in peace and security. Gaza, home to over two million Palestinians, has been described as an open-air prison, with severe restrictions on the movement of people and goods, crippling the local economy, and leading to widespread poverty, malnutrition, and a healthcare crisis. Repeated military assaults, such as those in 2008-2009, 2014, and more recently, have resulted in thousands of Palestinian civilian deaths, including women and children.



Palestinian families walk through destroyed neighbourhoods in Gaza City on 24 November 2023 as the temporary truce between Hamas and the Israeli army takes effect (MEE/Mohammed al-Hajjar)

Reports by organizations such as Human Rights Watch and Amnesty International have accused Israel of practicing apartheid—a system of governance that ensures the domination of one racial group over another. Furthermore, the United Nations has documented extensive human rights violations committed by Israeli forces, including extrajudicial killings, arbitrary arrests, and collective punishment against Palestinians. Some legal experts have gone further, suggesting that these actions collectively amount to ethnic cleansing, a charge often linked to genocidal practices.

U.S. Complicity: Facilitating the Occupation

The United States plays a critical role in enabling these policies. By providing military aid and diplomatic cover, the U.S. has effectively emboldened Israel's actions. American weapons, such as F-16 fighter jets and precision-guided missiles, have been used in Israeli military operations that resulted in high civilian casualties in Gaza. In many instances, U.S.-supplied munitions have been linked to airstrikes that killed large numbers of Palestinian civilians, including during the bombings of densely populated areas, schools, hospitals, and U.N.-run facilities.

Furthermore, the U.S. has historically used its position as a permanent member of the

United Nations Security Council to veto resolutions that seek to hold Israel accountable for its actions. Since 1972, the U.S. has cast over 50 vetoes related to Israel, often thwarting international efforts to impose sanctions or initiate investigations into potential war crimes. This diplomatic shield has allowed Israel to operate without fear of international consequences.

The U.S. also plays a significant role in the Israeli economy, particularly through economic assistance and trade agreements that bolster Israel's military-industrial complex. By ensuring Israel's military superiority in the region, the U.S. directly contributes to the continuation of the occupation and the oppression of Palestinians. Moreover, the U.S. government has consistently ignored or dismissed calls from human rights groups, international bodies, and even its own lawmakers to condition aid to Israel on its compliance with international law.

The Moral and Legal Responsibility of the United States

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)



Given the U.S.'s direct involvement in providing military, financial, and diplomatic support to Israel, there is a strong argument to be made that the U.S. shares responsibility for the crimes being committed against the Palestinian people. Under international law, states that provide significant support to a country engaged in widespread human rights violations can be held complicit. The International Court of Justice (ICJ) has previously ruled that states have a duty not to aid or assist another state in the commission of internationally wrongful acts.

By continuing to fund and arm Israel, despite overwhelming evidence of systematic human rights abuses and violations of international law, the U.S. could be seen as aiding and abetting Israel's actions. Some legal scholars have gone further, suggesting that U.S. officials could be prosecuted for war crimes or crimes against humanity in international courts. While this remains a distant prospect due to political realities, the moral responsibility of the U.S. government and its citizens cannot be easily dismissed.

The Path Forward: Accountability and Change

To end the cycle of violence and oppression, the U.S. must reassess its relationship with Israel and take concrete steps toward ensuring accountability. This could involve conditioning military aid on Israel's compliance with international law, supporting U.N.

investigations into war crimes, and pushing for a genuine peace process that addresses the core issues of occupation, settlement expansion, and the right of return for Palestinian refugees.

Moreover, U.S. lawmakers and citizens must acknowledge the country's role in perpetuating the crisis. Advocacy groups, such as the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, have gained traction in calling for economic and cultural pressure on Israel to end its human rights abuses. By shifting public opinion and pushing for policy changes in Washington, there is potential for a more just and equitable solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Conclusion

The U.S. support for Israel in its actions against Palestinians cannot be viewed in isolation. It is part of a broader geopolitical strategy, but it has real and devastating human consequences. As the occupation drags on and the violence intensifies, the international community must confront the uncomfortable truth that the U.S. has been a key enabler of what many see as genocide and crimes against humanity. Ending this complicity is not only a moral imperative but a necessary step toward achieving lasting peace and justice for the Palestinian people.

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