

# American Veterans Demand Termination of Weapons to Israel

Letter calls on State Department Inspector-General to investigate illegal shipments and numerous violations of Federal law

By [Veterans for Peace](#)

Global Research, March 05, 2024

[Antiwar.com](#) 13 February 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#), [Militarization and](#)

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[First posted by GR on February 14, 2024.]

*In a [letter to the Inspector-General](#) of the U.S. State Department, a national veterans' organization yesterday demanded the State Department terminate weapons shipments to Israel and called on the Inspector General to investigate alleged criminal acts by senior Biden administration officials in violation of U.S. law, including ratified treaties, which are the supreme law of the land.*

**Josh Paul**, former State Department senior official who resigned over weapons shipments to Israel said,

**"The Secretary and all relevant officials under his purview should take this letter from Veterans For Peace with the utmost seriousness. It is a stark reminder of the importance of abiding by the laws and policies that relate to arms transfers."**

Mike Ferner, VFP National Director, said,

"Just as any good soldier can recognize when they are given an unlawful order, we believe some State Department staff are horrified at the orders they're given and will decide to uphold the law, find the courage to speak out and demand an end to the carnage. VFP enthusiastically supports Josh Paul for what he did and we believe the

public does, too. The IDF has killed over 30,000 Palestinians and is utterly destroying Gaza. These actions amount to genocide, war crimes, and crimes against humanity, and VFP wants them investigated.”

“Unless no one in the entire [U.S. State Department](#) has seen the news in the last four months, they *have* to be aware of Israel’s illegal activity. But just in case, our letter to the Inspector General spells it out in chapter and verse. We believe the State Department – from the Secretary down to every staff person working on arms transfers to Israel – is in criminal violation of U.S. statutes regarding how U.S. weaponry can be used. There’s no ‘Israel exception’ that makes it okay for U.S. weapons to be used in genocide even if it’s labeled self-defense,” Ferner concluded.

The letter from Veterans For Peace alleges violations by the U.S. government and its officials of:

- [The Conventional Arms Transfer Policy](#), which prohibits U.S. weapons transfers when it’s likely they will be used by Israel to commit genocide; crimes against humanity; and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, including attacks intentionally directed against civilian objects or civilians protected or other serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law, including serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against children. Dozens of authoritative complaints and referrals made by hospital administrators in Gaza, as well as by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Palestine Authority, South Africa, Turkey, Mediciens san Frontieres, UNRWA, UNICEF, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the World Food Programme, have confirmed that there is an ongoing human rights and humanitarian disaster due to Israel’s cutoff of water and electricity, deliberate destruction of sewage infrastructure and delaying of aid shipments by Israeli forces.
- [The Foreign Assistance Act](#), which forbids the provision of assistance to a government which “engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.”
- [Arms Export Control Act](#), which says countries that receive US military aid can only use weapons for legitimate self-defense and internal security. Israel’s genocidal campaign in Gaza goes way beyond self-defense and internal security.
- [The U.S. War Crimes Act](#), which forbids grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, including willful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, willfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, and unlawful deportation or transfer, perpetrated by the Israeli Occupying Forces.
- [The Leahy Law](#), which prohibits the U.S. Government from using funds for assistance to units of foreign security forces where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights.
- [The Genocide Convention Implementation Act](#), which was enacted to implement U.S. obligations under the Genocide Convention, provides for criminal penalties for individuals who commit or incite others to commit genocide.

Human rights attorney, Terry Lodge, who drafted the VFP letter, pointed out what he called “The State Department’s double standard to determine war criminality,” citing a December 6, 2023, determination by Secretary Blinken, “that the Rapid Support Forces (RSF) of Sudan had ‘committed crimes against humanity and ethnic cleansing.’ As horrible as the crimes of

the RSF may be, they pale compared to what Israel is doing in Gaza.”



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#### NATIONAL DIRECTOR

Mike Ferner

February 11, 2024

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RE: Veterans For Peace demand for termination of provision of military  
weapons and munitions to Israel

Dear Secretary Blinken, Ms. Lewis, Ms. Leaf, Mr. Gilchrist and Ms. Shaw:

On behalf of thousands of members of Veterans for Peace (VFP), I am writing to urgently demand that the Department of State immediately suspend ongoing shipments of military weapons and munitions from the United States to Israel. We further demand that consideration of approvals of prospective shipments be terminated immediately.

Veterans For Peace is a 39-year-old international organization composed of war veterans and other opponents of war. From its inception, VFP has been a

public watchdog and critic of U.S. foreign and military policy.

We make this demand because of apparent violations by the Department of State officials and staff of the requirements of the Foreign Assistance Act, Arms Export Control Act, Leahy Laws, the Conventional Arms Transfer Policy (NSM-18) of February 2023, the U.S. War Crimes Act and the Genocide Implementation Prevention Act. Those laws individually and collectively prohibit transfers of weapons and munitions to Israel if there is credible evidence the arms will be used by Israel to commit, or aggravate risks that Israel will commit: genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949, or other serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law.

Veterans for Peace is undertaking a public investigation, as well as making a referral to the Department's Inspector-General, because we believe these statutes may have been violated by staff at the Department of State:

- **The Conventional Arms Transfer Policy**, which prohibits U.S. weapons transfers when it's more likely than not that the arms will be used by Israel to commit genocide; crimes against humanity; and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, including attacks intentionally directed against civilian objects or civilians protected or other serious violations of international humanitarian or human rights law, including serious acts of gender-based violence or serious acts of violence against children. Dozens of authoritative complaints and referrals made by hospital administrators in Gaza, as well as by Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, Palestine Authority, South Africa, Turkey, Medecins sans Frontieres, UNRWA, UNICEF, the Secretary-General of the United Nations, the Norwegian Refugee Council and the World Food Programme have confirmed that there is an ongoing human rights and humanitarian disaster due to Israel's cutoff of water and electricity, deliberate destruction of sewage infrastructure and delaying of aid shipments by Israeli forces.
- **The Foreign Assistance Act**, which forbids the provision of assistance to a government which "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights."
- **Arms Export Control Act**, which says countries that receive US military aid can only use weapons for legitimate self-defense and internal security. Israel's genocidal campaign in Gaza goes way beyond self-defense and internal security.
- **The U.S. War Crimes Act**, which forbids grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, including wilful killing, torture or inhuman treatment, wilfully causing great suffering or serious injury to body or health, and unlawful deportation or transfer, perpetrated by the Israeli Occupying Forces.
- **The Leahy Law**, which prohibits the U.S. Government from using funds for assistance to units of foreign security forces where there is credible information implicating that unit in the commission of gross violations of human rights.



- **The Genocide Convention Implementation Act**, which was enacted to implement U.S. obligations under the Genocide Convention, provides for criminal penalties for individuals who commit or incite others to commit genocide.

There are many credible reports of major crimes under international law being committed by military units of the Israel Defense Force (IDF) in its continuing invasion of the Gaza Strip. The IDF is using primarily U.S. weapons and munitions to prosecute its operations in Gaza.<sup>1</sup> There is a growing body of evidence of Israel's genocidal act and genocidal intent and commission of war crimes, crimes against humanity, and crimes of aggression with the material support of the U.S. since Israel commenced its bombardment and invasion of Gaza on October 7, 2023.<sup>2</sup> Possible major crimes committed during the IDF's invasion of the Gaza Strip since October 7, 2023 include genocide; war crimes; crimes against humanity; and grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions of 1949. The underlying offenses include summary executions and intentional mass killings of noncombatants, disproportionate attacks by the IDF, attacks on hospitals and other health services as well as, cultural, historical and governmental properties, ethnic cleansing, intentional starvation of civilians and depriving them of water and energy supplies, and more. Human Rights Watch published a report in December 2023 extensively documenting allegations that Israel has been using starvation of the Palestinians in Gaza as a weapon of war.<sup>3</sup> HRW stated, "Israeli forces are deliberately blocking the delivery of water, food, and fuel, while willfully impeding humanitarian assistance, apparently razing agricultural areas, and depriving the civilian population of objects indispensable to their survival." It cited public statements of intention to do so by at least three Israeli ministers, the testimony of Palestinians, and announcements by the Norwegian Refugee Council.<sup>4</sup> The World Food Programme recently provided eyewitness observations which indict Israel's aid inspection regime as a central culprit in disallowing humanitarian aid.<sup>5</sup>

In addition to all previous credible reports, the Department of State must also now take notice of the January 26, 2024 Order<sup>6</sup> by the International Court of Justice which holds that

<sup>1</sup> See, for example, "Israel/OPT: US-made munitions killed 43 civilians in two documented Israeli air strikes in Gaza – new investigation," <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/12/israel-opt-us-made-munitions-killed-43-civilians-in-two-documented-israeli-air-strikes-in-gaza-new-investigation/>; "Israel Used U.S.-Supplied White Phosphorus in Lebanon Attack," <https://www.washingtonpost.com/investigations/2023/12/11/israel-us-white-phosphorus-lebanon/>; "A Times Investigation Tracked Israel's Use of One of Its Most Destructive Bombs in South Gaza," [https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/21/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-bomb-investigation.html?unlocked\\_article\\_code=1.Q00.zYAj.4vnanqSMoGd1&smid=url-share](https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/21/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-bomb-investigation.html?unlocked_article_code=1.Q00.zYAj.4vnanqSMoGd1&smid=url-share); "Military briefing: the Israeli bombs raining on Gaza," <https://www.ft.com/content/7b407c2e-8149-4d83-be01-72dcae8aee7b>

<sup>2</sup> See, e.g., "Amnesty International, Damning evidence of war crimes as Israeli attacks wipe out entire families in Gaza," Oct. 20, 2023, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2023/10/damning-evidence-of-war-crimes-as-israeli-attacks-wipe-out-entire-families-in-gaza/>; see also "Emergency Legal Briefing: Israel's Unfolding Crime of Genocide of the Palestinian People & U.S. Failure to Prevent and Complicity in Genocide," Center for Constitutional Rights (Oct. 18, 2023), [https://ccrjustice.org/sites/default/files/attach/2023/10/Israels-Unfolding-Crime\\_ww.pdf](https://ccrjustice.org/sites/default/files/attach/2023/10/Israels-Unfolding-Crime_ww.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> <https://www.hrw.org/news/2023/12/18/israel-starvation-used-weapon-war-gaza>

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.nrc.no/news/2023/november/not-enough-water-to-survive/>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.wfp.org/stories/hungers-border-why-aid-trucks-taking-humanitarian-gear-and-food-gaza-face-long-waits>

<sup>6</sup> <https://www.icj-cij.org/sites/default/files/case-related/192/192-20240126-ord-01-00-en.pdf>

[Click here to read the full letter.](#)

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Featured image: U.S.-supplied military equipment arriving in Israel, December 2023. [Source: [timesofisrael.com](https://www.timesofisrael.com/)]

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