



What are Joint Resolutions of Disapproval?

In August, the Biden Administration approved a series of arms sales to Israel totaling more than \$20 billion.

Joint Resolutions of Disapproval (JRDs) led by Senators Bernie Sanders (VT), Peter Welch (VT), Jeff Merkley (OR), and Brian Schatz (HI) would block the sale of many of these offensive weapons, including *Joint Direct Attack Munitions* and *120mm artillery shells*, which have been used in strikes that have killed thousands of civilians, including aid workers and journalists, in Gaza over the last year.

U.S. law *prohibits* the provision of security assistance to foreign military units that have committed gross violations of human rights. According to credible reports, including from *human rights organizations* and the *United Nations*, Israeli forces have engaged in a pattern of unlawful attacks in Gaza. Independent investigations have also *found that U.S. weapons* have been used in several unlawful attacks that killed dozens of Palestinian civilians, including children.

Details on the JRDs to Block Specific Weapons Sales to Israel

These JRDs oppose multiple offensive arms sales to Israel that have been used in violation of U.S. law and policy. They include:

S.Res.111

Focus: 120mm Tank Rounds
Value: \$774.1 million
Leads: Sens. Sanders, Welch, Merkley, and Schatz

S.Res.112

Focus: Medium Tactical Vehicles
Value: \$583.1 million
Leads: Sens. Sanders, Welch

S.Res.113

Focus: 120mm High Explosive Mortar Rounds
Value: \$61.1 million
Leads: Sens. Sanders, Welch, and Merkley

S.Res.114

Focus: F-15IA Fighter Aircraft
Value: \$18.82 billion
Leads: Sen. Sanders

S.Res.115

Focus: Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs)
Value: \$262 million
Leads: Sens. Sanders, Welch, and Merkley

S.Res.116

Focus: Anti-Jam and Global Positioning System (GPS) Receivers
Leads: Sens. Sanders, Welch, and Merkley

The JRD Process Explained

In 1974, Congress passed legislation requiring the President to provide notifications of major arms sales and created a process to block an arms sale by passing expedited resolutions, enabling a fast-tracked floor debate and vote.

Under the Arms Export Control Act (AECA), Congress generally has 30 days to pass a JRD to block a weapons transfer through both chambers after receiving notification of a sale from the State Department. However, for Israel and NATO allies, this window is shortened to 15 days. Only Senate JRDs can move through a fast-tracked, expedited process and go straight to the floor. House JRDs must go through the normal legislative process, including a committee markup.

Sens. Sanders, Welch, Merkley, and Schatz have invoked expedited procedures under the AECA that will force a vote to block several major offensive weapon sales to Israel worth roughly \$20 billion. This will be the first major vote in Congress to halt weapons sales to Israel.

Counterpoints and Rebuttals

Without these U.S. weapons, Israel can't defend against attacks from Hezbollah, Hamas, and Iran.

These JRDs do not block defensive systems like the *Iron Dome and David's Sling*, which are specifically designed to intercept rockets and protect civilians from incoming attacks. Instead, these JRDs only impact offensive weapons, such as 120mm artillery shells and Joint Direct Attack Munitions (JDAMs), that have been linked to gross violations of human rights in Gaza. The senators deliberately chose not to block the sale of air-to-air missiles that serve a defensive purpose.

There is no military solution to the conflict in Gaza, only a diplomatic one that addresses the root causes of violence. Instead of sending more offensive weapons to Israel, Congress, and the administration should leverage this military aid with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to get him to finally accept a ceasefire deal in Gaza and Lebanon. Reaching an immediate ceasefire is a far more effective strategy to support both Palestinian human rights and Israel's long-term national security.

Israel has been improving humanitarian access, so now isn't the time to block arms sales.

There is no evidence that aid access in Gaza is improving. We are seeing the lowest levels of aid deliveries in northern Gaza since the start of the war, with famine and disease on the rise. A record-low average of *69 aid trucks per day* entered Gaza in August 2024, compared to *500 per day* last year. Israel is currently impeding nearly *90% of humanitarian movements* between northern and southern Gaza and still requires onerous vetting and customs requirements for humanitarian staff and shipments, further delaying assistance.

Moreover, on October 28, Israel's Knesset voted to terminate UNRWA's ability to operate in occupied Palestine within 90 days. This move will only further exacerbate an already catastrophic humanitarian crisis. In October, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin sent a *letter* to Israel expressing deep concern over this decision and aid access more broadly, stating that "enacting such restrictions would devastate the Gaza humanitarian response at this critical moment and deny vital educational and social services to tens of thousands of Palestinians in the West Bank and East Jerusalem."

We should leave it to President Biden to negotiate a ceasefire. If he wants to suspend arms sales, that's up to him.

Congress isn't a passive bystander. It's a coequal branch of government and shares responsibility for what's happening in Gaza. This is especially true when it involves U.S. weapons that senators and representatives have voted repeatedly to send to Israel. Leaving this issue entirely to President Biden and his administration isn't enough and shirks key oversight responsibilities entrusted to members of Congress.

The administration has had over a year to achieve a ceasefire and compel the Israeli government to do more to protect civilians and increase humanitarian aid access. President Biden's Gaza policy has failed and Congress must do more to end the violence, achieve a comprehensive ceasefire, the return of the hostages, and end U.S. complicity in gross violations of human rights in Gaza, as required by U.S. law and policy.

I'm focused on the humanitarian situation and getting a ceasefire—I don't want to wade into the arms debate.

These issues are deeply interconnected. Getting aid into Gaza will require real leverage, and that means threatening to withhold weapons that fuel the conflict. Right now, the Biden Administration's occasional threats to uphold key U.S. laws and policies over humanitarian access issues—like the *Foreign Assistance Act* and *National Security Memorandum 20*—aren't viewed as credible by Israel or by regional actors, because to date there have been no real consequences attached.

This has sent a message of impunity to the government of Israel as it has carried out a military campaign that President Biden himself has labeled "*indiscriminate*," and which is creating one of the world's worst man-made humanitarian catastrophes.

Version with hyperlinked sources here: www.fcnl.org/JRD-explained

