

USAID'S FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL
DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES IN THE ERA OF
GREAT POWER COMPETITION

HEARING

BEFORE THE

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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USAID'S FOREIGN POLICY AND INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT PRIORITIES IN THE ERA OF GREAT POWER COMPETITION

Wednesday, April 10, 2024

HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES,
COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS,
Washington, DC.

The committee met, pursuant to notice, at 2:40 p.m., in room 2172, Rayburn House Office Building, Hon. Michael McCaul (chairman of the committee) presiding.

STATEMENT OF CHAIRMAN MICHAEL McCAUL

Chairman McCAUL. The Committee on Foreign Affairs will come to order.

The purpose of this hearing is to discuss USAID's foreign policy and international development priorities in the era of great power competition. I recognize myself for an opening statement.

I want to thank you, Administrator Power, for joining us here today. I've enjoyed working with you over the years as the United States continues to address the many challenges that we face in the world today.

USAID is the U.S. government's primary humanitarian and development assistance organization in the world. They are the people who bring food to starving children, bring medicine to the sick and dying, help rebuild schools and bridges and roads when war or natural disasters have washed them away, and we're seeing quite a bit of that today.

That is our soft power and that's why I think it's critical that USAID have a cohesive strategy to grow America's soft influence while using U.S. taxpayer money as effectively and efficiently as possible.

One of the biggest success stories of U.S. assistance is PEPFAR. To date over 25 million lives have been saved. The president of Botswana personally told me that PEPFAR has, quote, "saved a generation from extinction" and at the same time it serves as one of America's best soft diplomacy tools.

I'm pleased to say that PEPFAR has been reauthorized. The budget you have submitted to our committee has some good provisions to project American leadership. However, much of this budget reads more like a wish list than a strategic document to promote American leadership.

The Chinese Communist Party poses a generational threat to the United States and now more than ever American diplomacy is critical to counter the CCP's growing influence. They use debt trap diplomacy through their Belt and Road Initiative and alarmingly to some extent they are succeeding.

In this great struggle for global balance of power the choices are clear—freedom and democracy or oppression and tyranny. Yet, this budget seems to place a higher priority on DEI programs than combating CCP's malign influence.

The budget includes \$3 billion earmarked for, quote, “inclusive gender equity” and another \$200 million for, quote, “gender equity and quality action fund.” Imposing these political ideologies is not aid, in my judgment.

Now I'd like to turn to Afghanistan where the Biden administration's chaotic and deadly withdrawal created a massive humanitarian crisis that we are dealing with today. We know for a fact that taxpayer funding aid is flowing to Taliban fighters and loyalists rather than suffering Afghan women and children. Hard fought gains to advance women's rights and promote democracy and stability in Afghanistan were wiped out by the decision to unilaterally withdraw.

Today Afghanistan is the most oppressive country in the world for women and girls. Girls have been banned from attending school. Women are banned from working for NGO's. This greatly diminishes the ability to get aid to women and children and the people who need it the most, and it further limits our oversight capabilities.

The U.S. must adamantly oppose this treatment of Afghan women and girls and we must work with our friends and allies to pressure the Taliban to lift these edicts.

Turning to the Western Hemisphere, the crisis at our southern border is the worst I've seen in my entire career. I continue to believe that it is a direct cause and effect of this administration rescinding the migrant protection protocols known as remain in Mexico.

USAID plays and must continue to play a critical role in combating the root causes of this migration. We need to turn off the magnet of open borders and the lack of enforcement of our immigration laws, which is creating this crisis at our border.

So finally, Administrator Power, I want to thank you, though, for being open and accessible and listening to me. We may not always agree. We can agree to disagree but we can always agree to have that conversation about what's most important for the American people and I want to thank you personally for that.

And with that, the chair now recognizes the ranking member.

STATEMENT OF RANKING MEMBER GREGORY MEEKS

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and I definitely want to say thank you to Administrator Power for you joining us today but all of your tireless work just trying to help people, just trying to feed people, just trying to show the very best of what the United States represents.

Your work and what you do on a continuous manner should be really important. You know, you lead a very vital agency at a time

when USAID's work, its investments in development and resilience and instability is desperately needed almost every place around the planet.

Over the last year alone Russia has intensified its brutal war against Ukraine. Gang violence in Haiti has accelerated the humanitarian crisis there.

The bloody conflict in Sudan has displaced millions of people and created the world's largest hunger crisis, and Israel has faced the deadliest terrorist attack in decades and the people of Gaza are now facing famine.

You know, what—yet, despite the increased need for USAID's important work I see my friends on the other side of the aisle want to cut your budget by as much as 12 percent. Though we Democrats pushed back against these shortsighted cuts we were disappointed that the Fiscal Year 1924 appropriations bill ultimately included a 6 percent cut to foreign assistance and many of us who supported that bill we only supported it because we wanted to avert a shutdown, which would have had a devastating—which would have had devastating consequences.

We must pass the delayed national security supplemental that passed overwhelmingly in the Senate on a bipartisan basis which contains over \$9 billion for humanitarian assistance. That's something that we need to pass. We must pass. We must get it on the floor. We must pass it.

We cannot build a safer, more prosperous world if Congress continues to gut diplomacy and development and I expect my Republican colleagues will ask you, Madam Administrator, how can the U.S. counter China's malign influence around the world while at the same time what they're doing is failing to provide you the funding needed to invest in the very tools required to compete.

That's how we combat China is by funding you and giving you the tools that is necessary. As we are cutting your budget China is increasing its. That's no way to stop China's influence.

Ukraine, already starved of ammunition as the GOP fails to bring forward a supplemental, has seen half of its energy infrastructure destroyed by Russia. Putin's war of choice decimated Ukraine's agriculture industry which drives up food prices globally as well as that's what causes inflation globally also.

We must do something immediately in that regards, and it also robs Ukraine of precious revenues keeping its economy afloat during this war.

In Sudan the civil war between the Sudanese Armed Forces and the Rapid Support Forces has led to devastating violence and we are seeing the use of sexual violence as a weapon of war against ethnic minorities and a humanitarian crisis deepened by the blocking of humanitarian aid. Eight million people have been displaced and famine conditions are expected by this summer in Sudan.

And, of course, in Gaza we have seen this conflict has resulted in the destruction of more than 60 percent of homes. Thirty-one percent of children under the age two are acutely malnourished and famine is imminent or already occurring.

So I look forward to hearing from you, Administrator Power, and how USAID can work to address this acute crisis, particularly as UNRWA funding remains suspended. We must do more to address

the crisis in Haiti which is engulfed in a growing catastrophe. Gangs now control more than 80 percent of Port-au-Prince.

These criminal gangs are responsible for extrajudicial killings, arms trafficking, systematic sexual and gender-based violence, looting, and unprecedented coordinated attacks against Haitian government institutions.

They have blocked the passage of water supplies and food, threatening widespread hunger and public health crises. You know, 5.5 million people, nearly half of the country's population, including 3 million children are reliant upon humanitarian assistance for their livelihoods.

Of course, we cannot speak about USAID's role in addressing the development needs of Haiti without a conversation regarding its security. The multinational security support mission in Haiti is vital for turning the corner on Haiti's security.

But, again, my Republican colleagues continue to block U.S. funding to support the MSS funding that has already been approved by Congress.

USAID plays an indispensable role in how the U.S. addresses all of these challenges. The foreign assistance that USAID administers is not a handout but a strategic investment in our future that is vital for U.S. global leadership and a stable, more resilient world and the work is needed to be done now more than ever.

And let me just conclude real quickly by stating that none of these challenges can be properly addressed without talented and dedicated workers at USAID and investing in their success.

I urge you, Administrator Power, to continue your efforts to ensure the agency's workforce reflects the diversity. Diversity is important in this country—in this country's history.

We must always be—diversity is strength. It's strength and an example for others to follow. The diversity of the American people is important including further expansion of USAID's successful educational partnership with minority-serving institutions.

And with that, I yield back my time.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields. Other members are reminded that opening statements may be submitted for the record. We're pleased to have here today the nineteenth USAID administrator Samantha Power before us today. Your full statement will be made part of the record.

I now recognize you for an opening statement.

**STATEMENT OF HON. SAMANTHA POWER, ADMINISTRATOR,
U.S. AGENCY FOR INTERNATIONAL DEVELOPMENT**

Ms. POWER. Thank you so much, Mr. Chairman. Thank you as well, Ranking Member Meeks, all of you who've made time to be here today. I know how much is going on.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Chairman MCCAUL. Order. The committee will come to order. The committee will come to order. The committee will come to order. The chair instructs the Capitol Police to remove the protesters from the committee room. The committee will recess until order is restored pending the call the chair.

Are we coming to order? Administrator, you may proceed.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Let me start—I will come, in fact, of course, to discussing Gaza but start with just an image to put in your minds taken from the lobby of the Republic of Korea’s development agency, which is their equivalent today of USAID.

In the lobby they display an old bag of flour from the 1940’s marked with the words “From the American people,” which, of course, is what we put on all of our USAID programming around the world.

This bag of flour, the remnants of it, is a reminder of how the United States supported the people of Korea when they were one of the poorest countries on the planet. Today, of course, South Korea is one of the world’s richest nations and last year they spent nearly \$4 billion providing aid to other nations.

This year they plan to increase that by 30 percent. That is the Republic of Korea’s story and that is the story of how the United States over time has supported countries in charting their own paths of development, a journey that has brought extraordinary results not only for our partners but for our own people.

We have helped stop the spread of diseases that threaten us all. We have helped developed more resilient high-yield crops that can feed growing populations.

We have helped people and nations rise up from poverty and in doing so also invested billions in American small businesses, opening up markets as well for American products.

Eight of our top 10 trading partners today were once the recipients of U.S. assistance. Under President Biden’s leadership and in partnership with this committee with whom we work really closely we are building on that remarkable legacy.

In Ukraine USAID has helped farmers withstand Putin’s brutal attempts to destroy the agricultural sector. Using resources that you all mobilized in the supplementals we have been able to get those farmers the seeds, the equipment, and help them build the alternative export routes that they needed while they obtained a military and logistic capability to reopen the Black Sea grain route that had, of course, been such a major export route before Putin’s full scale invasion.

Just to pause for a second on what that work has produced, Ukraine has actually rebounded its grain export numbers to near prewar levels, some months even exceeding what they were able to export in the agricultural sector. That is just remarkable, but it also has had the effect of helping bring down global grain prices by 26 percent since their high point in 2022.

In Nigeria we are providing community health workers with X-ray and portable artificial intelligence technologies to spot diseases like tuberculosis early, which has helped increase TB diagnoses by a third in a single year so that patients can get treatment and outbreaks don’t spread across the planet.

Across Africa we are working to connect African and American companies and reduce barriers to trade through the PROSPER Africa Initiative, efforts that since 2019 have generated some \$86 billion in trade and investment, again, building prosperity not only for our African partners but also for those businesses that have connected here at home.

Bipartisan support for these efforts makes Americans safer and more prosperous and provides a critical foundation for American influence in a world where other global powers, as the chairman and Ranking Member Meeks have alluded to, those other powers are working aggressively to erode U.S. alliances and diminish basic rights and freedoms around the world.

For example, the PRC's global lending spree has made the PRC now the world's largest debt collector. That is an important fact and one that I think we need to do more to communicate about.

For every dollar of assistance that the PRC provides to low income and middle income countries the PRC has provided \$9 of debt. So for every dollar of grant \$9 in debt. The opposite is true of the United States. For every dollar of debt we provide we provide at least \$9 of assistance.

The PRC's assistance, as you all know, tends to be negotiated behind closed doors, which helps fuel corruption and can often give rise to programs and initiatives that show a flagrant disregard for human rights.

One famous example is the Safe Cities Initiative whereby the PRC has provided surveillance and facial recognition technology that can monitor critics, journalists, and activists, and that technology has been provided to more than 80 countries.

We need American leadership to advance different models of development and governance, models that honor freedom, transparency, dignity and opportunity for all.

The Biden-Harris administration's Fiscal Year 2025 request of \$28.3 billion for USAID's fully and partially managed accounts give us the resources to continue that leadership.

With these funds we will help nations around the world strengthen food security, improve health, and drive economic growth. We will also respond to historic levels of humanitarian need.

USAID teams have been working day and night to address the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza where nearly the entire population is living under the threat of famine.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Chairman McCAUL. The committee will come to order. The committee will come to order. The committee will suspend while the Capitol Police restore order. The committee will suspend until Capitol Police restore order. The Capitol Police will remove protesters from the committee room. No more outbursts.

You may proceed, Administrator.

Ms. POWER. I will, and I will wrap up here shortly.

Combining, again, the response to the catastrophe in Gaza we are also, of course, working to address the crises that you mentioned in Ukraine, Sudan, and beyond and a growing number of natural disasters that are battering vulnerable people.

To put this in numbers, the number of people in humanitarian need needing humanitarian assistance has increased by nearly a third, from 274 million in 2022 to 363 million at the end of last year—at the end of 2023.

Increasing by that amount in such a short period of time really speaks to the level of need out there. So we will need both the \$10 billion in this budget request that you have before you but also, as has been mentioned, desperately need the \$10 billion in the emer-

gency humanitarian assistance in the pending national security supplemental.

If we don't get these resources we will be forced to make draconian cuts in Gaza, in Ukraine, in Sudan. The list goes on.

I want to just wrap up by talking about our recognition, though, also the need for tradeoffs and the need for cost effectiveness. This budget gives us specific resources to help us deliver better value for money.

We just last year inaugurated a new Office of the Chief Economist and that team is already expanding our use of rigorous analysis across the agency to identify those programs that can give us the highest impact per dollar invested, the so-called best buy, so that those can be scaled.

I'll give you just one quick example where this team identified a poverty reduction program in Uganda, which is offering a sequenced set of supports like trainings and financial services that help refugees move from needing humanitarian assistance to earning sustainable livelihoods for themselves.

For every dollar being invested in that program households are seeing over four times the return in economic benefits and we are now expanding it to other nations.

You have given us the ability to launch something called the Edge Fund, which is an incentive fund to fuel public-private partnerships, and it is designed to apply the private sector's unique comparative advantages to some of the largest global development challenges.

These seed resources give us catalytic and derisking money to work with companies like Citibank, Wal-Mart, Johnson & Johnson. The list goes on.

And I'm very proud, Mr. Chairman, working with you, the ranking member and others we have between—

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Chairman McCAUL. The committee will suspend while the Capitol Police restore order. The committee will come to order.

Administrator, you may proceed.

Ms. POWER. T1Simply to say that in trying to catalyze far more private sector investment we have been successful in growing public-private partnerships and private sector partner contributions to USAID activities by over 60 percent just since Fiscal Year 1921.

To continue to drive that progress we need to keep investing in our workforce, make sure that it is nimble and empowered to pursue truly catalytic change.

If we do make these investments I have no doubt we can continue America's extraordinary legacy of leadership in building a more secure and prosperous world for all.

Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

[The prepared statement of Ms. Power follows:]

AS PREPARED
Remarks of USAID Administrator Samantha Power
House Foreign Affairs Committee
FY 2025 Budget Testimony
April 10, 2024

Thank you Chairman McCaul, Ranking Member Meeks, and other distinguished members of the Committee.

In the lobby of the Republic of Korea's development agency—their equivalent of USAID—they display an old bag of flour from the 1940s, marked with the words: "From the American People." It's a reminder of how the U.S. supported them when they were one of the poorest countries on the planet to fight hunger and disease and kickstart economic growth. Today, of course, South Korea is one of the world's richest nations — and last year spent nearly four billion dollars providing aid to other nations. This year they plan to spend nearly five billion.

The decades that the United States has supported countries in charting their own paths of development have brought extraordinary results—for our partners and for our own people. We've helped stop the spread of diseases that threaten us all and develop more resilient, high-yield crops that can feed growing populations. We've helped people and nations rise from poverty, and in doing so invested billions in American small businesses and opened up new markets for American products; eight of our top ten trading partners were once recipients of U.S. assistance.

Under President Biden's leadership and in partnership with this Committee, we are building on that remarkable legacy. In Ukraine, for example, USAID has helped farmers withstand Putin's attempts to destroy the agricultural sector by getting them the seeds, equipment, and alternative export routes they need—efforts that have helped Ukraine rebound their grain exports to near pre-war levels and helped bring global food prices down 26 percent from their 2022 peak. In Nigeria, we're providing community health workers with technologies to spot diseases like tuberculosis early, which helped increase TB diagnoses by a third in a single year—so patients can get treatment and outbreaks won't spread across the planet. Across the African Continent, we are working to connect African and American companies and reduce barriers to trade through the Prosper Africa Initiative—efforts that since 2019 have generated some \$86 billion in trade and investment that builds prosperity for both our African partners and businesses here at home.

Bipartisan support for these efforts makes Americans safer and more prosperous—and provides a critical foundation for American influence and leadership in a world where other global powers are working aggressively to erode U.S. alliances, undermine democracy, and diminish basic rights and freedoms.

For example, the PRC's global lending spree has made it the world's largest debt collector. For every dollar of aid it provides to low-income and middle-income countries,

China has provided \$9 of debt, while the opposite is true of the U.S.: for every dollar of debt we provide, we provide at least \$9 of aid. The PRC's assistance tends to be negotiated behind closed doors, fueling corruption, and can demonstrate a flagrant disregard for human rights. To offer one chilling example, through the PRC's efforts to help countries build so-called "Safe Cities," they have provided surveillance and facial recognition technology that can monitor critics, journalists, and activists to at least 80 countries.

We need American leadership to advance models of development and governance that honor freedom, transparency, human dignity, and opportunity for all.

The Biden-Harris Administration's FY 2025 request of \$28.3 billion for USAID's fully- and partially-managed accounts give us the resources to continue that leadership.

With these funds, we will help nations around the world strengthen food security, improve health, and drive economic growth. And we will respond to historic levels of humanitarian need. USAID teams have been working day and night to address the catastrophic humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where nearly the entire population is living under the threat of famine. Add to that ongoing crises in Ukraine, Sudan, and beyond, and continued battering from a growing number of natural disasters during this particularly strong El Niño, and the number of people requiring humanitarian assistance has increased by nearly a third—from 274 million in 2022 to 363 million at the end of 2023. To meet these needs, we will need both the \$10 billion in this budget as well as the \$10 billion in emergency humanitarian assistance in the pending national security supplemental request. Otherwise, we will be forced to make draconian cuts to rations all around the world.

The FY 2025 Request recognizes the need for tradeoffs even as global needs are escalating. And crucially, this budget gives us specific resources to help us deliver even better value for money. Since we inaugurated our new Office of the Chief Economist last July, the team is already expanding our use of rigorous data analysis across the agency to identify the programs with the highest impact per dollar invested so they can be scaled. For instance, they identified a poverty reduction program our Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance is piloting in Uganda, which is offering a sequenced set of supports like trainings and financial services that help refugees move from requiring humanitarian assistance to earning sustainable livelihoods for themselves. For every dollar we invest, households are seeing over four times the return in economic benefits. We are now expanding the program to other nations.

And beyond maximizing our own resources, we are drawing in new partners through tools like our EDGE Fund—an incentive fund designed to apply the private sector's unique edge to some of the largest global development challenges. We're working with companies like Citibank, Walmart, and Johnson & Johnson to boost our impact and drive progress beyond our programs. From FY 2021 to FY 2022 alone, private-sector partner contributions to USAID activities jumped by 31 percent. To continue to drive

this progress, we need to keep investing in a workforce that's nimble and empowered to pursue truly catalytic change.

If we do make these investments, I have no doubt that we can continue America's extraordinary legacy of leadership in building a more secure, prosperous, and stable world for all.

#

Chairman McCAUL. Thank you, Administrator.

Let me just say I admire and appreciate your passion that you bring to this job and it is a very difficult job that carries a lot of responsibility.

I want to turn to Afghanistan. We heard testimony from Generals McKenzie and Milley about the withdrawal.

[Disturbance in hearing room.]

Chairman McCAUL. The committee will come to order.

The committee will suspend until Capitol Police escort the protesters out.

What was clear in that testimony is that Ambassador Wilson believed that we could hold on to the embassy and keep the flag flying because, in his view, he believed we can normalize relations with the Taliban.

That didn't work out so well. Now the Taliban is in control of the country, and I talked about the impact on the women and girls in that country. We have provided \$2 billion since August 2021 and SIGAR produced its report that revealed, as I feared, that U.S. cash shipments do in fact benefit the Taliban.

My question is how do you plan to revise this program to ensure the Taliban is not benefiting from this assistance. In other words, what is your alternative to cash payments?

Ms. POWER. Well, one of the reasons that the voucher system has become a system of choice in many parts of the world is we are, of course, interested in working to ensure that citizens are not dependent on humanitarian assistance and one of the things that vouchers do is they allow markets to get created—you know, shopkeepers to make money, goods to be procured and manufactured locally.

So cash programs are an important part of the solution through vouchers but they are also useful because vouchers allow for more transparency, you know, where the money is going.

So we are continually assessing our activities. As you know, we work only with trusted partners like the World Food Programme, UNICEF, and others that we work with all around the world.

In Afghanistan, beyond our standard rigorous controls and assurances and the requirement that every implementing partner has to report any diversion, we have independent third party monitoring that does site visits and tries to scrutinize those transactions.

Again, we have seen partners that we fund actually suspending assistance because of the diversion or because women are not allowed to be employed depending—there's two sets of reasons to suspend and then after conditions change restarting assistance.

So happy to work with your teams—

Chairman McCAUL. Can I ask you about that? Because the NGO's were prohibited from hiring women. Has that changed? And what have you done to try to help change that policy?

Ms. POWER. Well, most of the U.N. or the U.N. system came together and developed a set of principles whereby women had to be beneficiaries of the resources, of course, and that women aid workers had to be part of delivery.

I would say in force the Taliban edict remains the same. Enforcement is uneven, and what our partners have done is find ways to

maneuver around it so as to ensure that women continue to be part of the delivery system in some form.

That doesn't always mean it is the same form in which it occurred prior to the fall of Kabul and the takeover by the Taliban.

Chairman MCCAUL. Well, I just want to ensure the U.S. taxpayer dollars are not directly funding the Taliban. I know you can't completely assure that and it's troubling. We're facing a similar issue with Haiti.

Until they have some form of government it's hard to provide that assistance, as I very much know how desperately it's needed, and I'm very empathetic to the people of Haiti.

Let me shift to your role as not just the administrator of USAID but you sit on the board of MCC and the Development Finance Corporation. These are the three main U.S. agencies that really can combat the malign influence of the Chinese Communist Party.

You talked about this in your opening statement. We are looking at ways to be more effective against the Belt and Road policies.

Can you comment on that but, specifically, we are working on a bipartisan bill to reform the Development Finance Corporation where we can provide them with more equity so that you can have more private investment in these countries that are almost held hostage to this debt trap that you talked about that the CCP gets them into.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, and thank you for your leadership in securing the passage of the BUILD Act in the first place and putting the D in development finance—in the Development Finance Corporation.

We work really closely with the DFC. As I've made clear to Scott Nathan and the DFC leadership, you know, we view USAID teams all around the world. We have missions in more than a hundred countries or programs in more than a hundred countries, missions in more than 80 countries.

That's our ground game for deal spotting, for creating regulatory reform that makes it possible then for the private sector to come in whether partnering with DFC or not.

So we're pretty heartened by where the partnership is going. About 20 percent of DFC's transactions this year were supported by USAID in some fashion. I think that can be even higher.

With regard to scoring, I know OMB and DFC are in touch and hoping to come forward with compromise language. There are different views on that, of course, up here on the Hill and within the administration.

But it would be extremely important that something be achieved in that regard, not least because even though we want to see DFC grow and know it needs to grow, particularly in light of geopolitical competition and then like of the infrastructure and other needs around the world, everything comes out of the same pot of resource constrained money.

And so, fundamentally, a scoring fix would also be very advantageous for us being able to grow our public-private partnerships, our economic growth programming, our efforts to help countries deal with debt that they've incurred through working with the PRC.

Chairman McCAUL. And I think the issue is the way it's scored by OMB it doesn't take into account the return on the investment that they get per dollar. And I know the ranking member and I are in agreement on this.

I've worked—and I've been talking to Senator Coons on the Senate side, and we are working in a bipartisan way like we normally do on this committee to reform this so it can work the way that Congress envisioned it to work.

And I appreciate your candor on this. It'll be helpful in terms of final passage. With that, the chair now recognizes the ranking member.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Again, thank you, Administrator Power, for leading in USAID and the role that USAID has played in trying to address the dire humanitarian situation in Gaza.

USAID and several other international partners have raised the alarm about the risk of famine in Gaza, particularly in the north where evidence indicates famine is eminent or possibly already happening and with the tragic killing of seven World Central Kitchen employees in a drone strike I fear humanitarian assistance delivery will become even more challenging.

So could you please update the committee on the status of food security in Gaza and what we are doing to address it beyond waiting for the construction of a temporary Department of Defense pier?

Ms. POWER. Thank you.

Well, let me just say that the conditions are as dire as any I have seen in my career and we have made some progress, I would say, a particular acceleration of progress in the last few days with more throughput—you know, more food and material getting into Gaza, over 400 trucks today or yesterday and the day before, and those are the first time that we have been able to clear that number.

But we need to go way beyond that because in addition to the fact that there were 500 trucks getting in commercial and humanitarian before October 7th the level of destruction as was alluded to, I think, by you in your opening statement, the destruction of granaries and markets and arable land and then the fact that so few trucks got in over so many months means we have massive catch up to do if we together are to avoid the worst form of famine imaginable.

So, again, you had very little—almost no child malnutrition before October 7th and you now have a massive spike, and particularly in the north one and three kids are suffering from malnutrition.

And, again, the reports of famine also spreading to the south makes sense, again, because so little assistance has gotten in commensurate to the needs of more than 2 million people.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you for that. And, as you also know, I continue to be deeply concerned for the people of Haiti. In fact, last month both you and Secretary Blinken responded to this crisis denouncing new humanitarian assistance funding for Haiti totaling more than \$58 million and, you know, I want to support programs that alleviate the suffering of the Haitian people, reduce violence

and support the peaceful transition of power in a process that is Haitian owned and led.

So my questions to you, Madam Administrator, is how was USAID addressing these objectives in the immediate and long term and what steps has USAID taken to ensure community-led organizations inside Haiti and the diaspora are included in programming, planning, and implementation?

Ms. POWER. Thank you. Well, with great difficulty is the short answer, particularly because of the breakdown of law and order in the capital and the gang takeover of many neighborhoods that until recently were stable.

Haiti has been challenged in terms of lawlessness and gang violence for a long time but this is certainly a scale of violence that we have not seen before.

I will say that most of USAID's programs outside of the capital are still functioning. Ninety-two percent of the clinics that you help us fund are still operational in Haiti.

We are working, of course, with the State Department in looking at ways we will be in a position to support the political transition that needs to move forward, has needed to move forward, as you well know, and a message you've delivered many times because, you know, again, the political, the security, the humanitarian, they all go together.

And so the Transitional Council needs to move forward, need to assume temporary powers but then move quickly to elections. At the same time, we really need this multinational security police support force—police force to be able to deploy.

In addition, that will then make it easier to resume training of the Haitian National Police who have really been courageous in trying to stand up to the gangs in these recent weeks of deterioration.

But we can't look at just the political or just the humanitarian or we'll be in stopgap security, political, humanitarian.

We need to deploy resources against all of those and, therefore, I hope—really sincerely hope that the holds will be lifted on the support that we are trying to provide the Kenyans so that they can get the predeployment training and equipment that they need to be able to do the job when they do deploy.

Mr. MEEKS. Thank you. I'm out of time.

I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. If I could just add to that.

I have requested a briefing from the National Security Council on this very issue. I want to be supportive. But until I've been briefed on what the plan is and where the money and guns are going to I cannot in good conscience send money and guns down to a lawless society without a government.

We have a long history in this country of arming countries with weapons and cash and it blows back on us. I want to make sure that what we're doing here is makes sense not only for the American taxpayer but for the Haitian people because if we arm the warlords and fund them they will be the victims. The people of Haiti will be the victims.

So with that, I recognize Mrs. Young Kim.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you, Chairman McCaul and Ranking Member Meeks, for holding today's foreign assistance budget hearing.

I want to thank Administrator Samantha Power for joining us and for your testimony. I especially appreciated your reference to South Korea.

After the Korean War, obviously, Korea has now become one of the economic superpowers and now as you mentioned they are now from recipient country to become a powerful donor country, providing \$4 billion to help other countries.

So that is a remarkable success story and, obviously, you make a very good case of why we need to continue to stay engaged in U.S. providing foreign, especially development assistance.

So today with the Japanese prime minister coming to Washington, DC, and addressing the joint sessions of Congress this week I wanted to raise the trilateral relationship between the United States, South Korea, and Japan.

I support the increased collaboration within this relationship on global development and health issues, particularly as Japan and South Korea emerged as leading bilateral donors especially in Southeast Asia.

I recently welcomed Assistant Administrator Schiffer to my office so we can discuss the issue ahead of myself and Congressman Ami Bera leading a bipartisan delegation on our trip to South Korea.

So I just wanted to mention that and ask you if you can share USAID's efforts to leverage this emerging relationship to increased cooperation on development and global health issues with our Indo-Pacific allies.

Ms. POWER. Thank you so much and thank you for all of your leadership on so many of the issues that we're going to be talking about today.

You know, I think this is one of the most exciting growth areas that I've seen. You know, I was part of the Obama administration for 8 years. I was out for 4 years, then came back, and it's really a sea change in our ability to sit down with our Korean and Japanese partners and, you know, brainstorm and plan together.

We see it happening at the country level. In Ghana, as you probably were briefed by Assistant Administrator Schiffer we have—a trilateral memorandum of cooperation on universal health coverage where we each try to leverage our specific areas of expertise and bring them to bear in a coordinated way.

One of the things I've only actually begun to sort of dig into the details on is we, in September of last year, I believe it was, signed a new memorandum of cooperation looking at electricity transmission lines in Sub-Saharan Africa and we're looking together between us, the Koreans, and the Japanese through Power Africa to develop 1,500 kilometers of new transmission lines to end energy poverty, and this follows the successful development of 2,000 kilometers of transmission lines under the previous agreements.

So I think you'll start to see almost a contagion here as missions get the experience of working trilaterally begin to branch out from health to agriculture to education, et cetera. But we're really trying to push it from headquarters.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you. You know, I also recently traveled to Southeast Asia where partners are eager to work with the United States and they are in desperate need of many of USAID's programs, particularly in the capacity building area and technical assistance.

This is urgent, given the growing influence of the Chinese Communist Party in the region and as U.S. allies in the Indo-Pacific such as South Korea, Japan, we're talking about, and Taiwan, they have adapted their own strategies to bolster their development programming in Southeast Asia.

So can you talk about how USAID is working with our allies in Northeast Asia to pursue the co-development or co-financing programmings in Southeast Asia?

Ms. POWER. Thank you. Well, I think what I saw on my visit last year to Vietnam is that the kinds of relationships we were just discussing, again, are playing out at the Ambassadorial level, at the embassy level.

One of our great comparative advantages as the United States is that we have these large teams at our missions constituted, largely, of citizens of the countries in which we work.

So in Vietnam that's hundreds of Vietnamese who work for the U.S. Government in pursuit of development and that is something we offer to our Japanese and our Korean counterparts and say, look, we have the spotters—a little bit like what I was saying on Development Finance Corporation—to ascertain where together we can make the greatest impact.

So, you know, I think I hope to have more examples to offer. I think clean energy transition in Indonesia is already an area of collaboration.

In Vietnam work in the Mekong together and, you know, just as I was saying with the PRC now the world's largest debt collector there is a real opening, and notwithstanding all of the PRC investments in recent years you're actually seeing a fairly precipitous decline in their investments through the Belt and Road Initiative and into infrastructure.

That creates really important possibilities for the President's global initiative on infrastructure as well to be something that we do together trilaterally with the Japanese and the Koreans.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you very much for the great work that you do. I look forward to continuing our conversation.

Ms. POWER. You too. Thank you.

Mrs. KIM OF CALIFORNIA. Thank you.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields.

Mr. Sherman is recognized.

Mr. SHERMAN. I yield 30 seconds to the ranking member.

Mr. MEEKS. I just want to thank the chairman for agreeing to look at to consider freezing—unfreezing the money going to Haiti.

Unfortunately, you know, we tried to set up a meeting with the NSC before we left but our schedules didn't work out. So, hopefully, we'll be able to schedule something this week.

I talked to your staff, but it's really important that we schedule that meeting very shortly so we can see if we can release that money because the Kenyans and the MSS forces will need that dollar.

Chairman McCAUL. I appreciate that. Perhaps the administrator can help facilitate the meeting. It shouldn't be that difficult to get a briefing, for God's sakes. I would think so.

Thank you. I yield.

Mr. SHERMAN. Speaking of briefings, I'm seeking a classified briefing on Israeli deployments and preparedness on October 6th and I hope to work with—I've been assured that I can get it for myself but I'd rather have it for the whole committee. I look forward to working with leadership.

I see in the audience my friend Sufi Laghari, who has worked tirelessly for human rights in southern Pakistan Sindh, and I want to recognize that this is the second anniversary of the disappearance and likely abduction of 7-year-old Pria Kumari, a Hindu girl in Sindh province who, perhaps like so many others, have been subjected to abductions, forced conversions, and forced marriages.

Ms. POWER, you do the most important work perhaps in the world. We are face—and I want to thank you for doing it. We have got the supplemental bill that's come over from the Senate and all the talk is that's money for Ukraine, money for Israel, perhaps Taiwan.

But there's a lot of money in that bill for humanitarian purposes, some of it Congress explicitly indicates where you're supposed to spend the money and the rest we give the administration discretion.

If we pass that bill can we be assured that, assuming the security conditions are adequate so that you can actually operate and, you know, things can deteriorate, we realize, can we be sure that money will be spent in Armenia, in Tigray, in Sudan?

Ms. POWER. Yes, and I'm happy to elaborate.

Mr. SHERMAN. And Eastern Congo and the Rohingya refugee camps in Myanmar—correction, in Bangladesh?

Ms. POWER. Yes. And maybe I'll just—just because you often ask about Ethiopia specifically I'd just give you one fact as to why this is so very urgent.

The humanitarian response plan in Ethiopia right now which is, you know, it's not something that's been mentioned prior to you mentioning it is—the proposal is for 3.2 billion people. That's—excuse me, \$3.2 billion. That's the level of need, 15.5 million people. It is 4 percent funded right now.

Mr. SHERMAN. Oh, my God.

Ms. POWER. We are way down in terms of—

Mr. SHERMAN. We, obviously, have to—I do want to move on. And I think the ranking member, of course, brought up the humanitarian needs in Haiti and Gaza, and I believe that money from that supplemental bill would go there as well, security conditions permitting, correct?

Ms. POWER. Correct. Correct.

Mr. SHERMAN. Now a somewhat harder question. There are two reasons to give foreign aid. One, it's the moral right thing to do and the second, the title of this hearing, that it helps our geopolitical position.

And we all—we're politicians. We recognize that cutting the ribbon, the taking credit for good things, is important politically. And

so you have people on the ground who tend to just want to focus on getting the job done, feeding the hungry people.

We had resistance 10, 15 years ago against even putting the flag on the bag because we had partners who didn't like America. They wanted the American grain.

And so, obviously, you cannot legally give money to any terrorist organization or any organization that provides material aid to terrorist organizations.

But is a part of your process in deciding which partners to fund looking at whether those organizations use their very powerful and U.S.-enhanced bully pulpit to attack America and its allies or to support our foreign policy?

How do you get people in your organization who just want to feed people to care about the second reason we fund foreign aid—the geopolitical?

Ms. POWER. Well, let me actually thank the chairman because some of the legislation that his team and maybe working with you have initiated on branding is really, really important because it's actually the law.

Mr. SHERMAN. I'm particularly concerned that an organization very close to Hamas, rhetorically, at least, is getting and has over many years while they've supported Hamas rhetorically been getting aid from USAID, and I'll put additional material in the record and provide it for you as well.

Ms. POWER. Okay. Thank you.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Mrs. Wagner.

Mrs. WAGNER. I thank the chairman, and thank you, Administrator Power, for being here.

For decades the United States has promoted global prosperity and self-sufficiency through its international development programs, an approach that recognizes the dignity and inherent value of our partner countries.

China, on the other hand, uses its so-called development programs to exploit and coerce. But instead of empowering countries to resist China's influence and pursue prosperity the administration is pushing its radical agenda on our development partners, sacrificing effectiveness and efficiency in service of unrealistic and, I think, unfair climate goals.

Administrator Power, according to the Atlantic Council, China's investment in sub-Saharan energy infrastructure grew by a factor of 10 over the 2010's and more than half of the \$52 billion in energy loans issued by China's two main development finance institutions between 2000 and 2022 were allocated to fossil fuels.

Our partners simply want greater access to electricity for their people. They should—this should be a no brainer for the United States. Why is the administration forcing costly clean energy projects on our African partners that are not responsive to their needs and taking pragmatic approaches like natural gas off the table?

Ms. POWER. Thank you. It will not shock you to hear that I need to reject the premise of the question because I think two aspects of it are at odds with what we find in the world.

First, as it happens, we have an all of the above approach to electrification and to energy. It is absolutely true that we want to lower emissions. We also recognize some of the deleterious health effects of pollution that stems from fossil—

Mrs. WAGNER. If I could—

Ms. POWER. If I could just finish and maybe make the second point because it may be more to your point.

Mrs. WAGNER. But your point is wrong. Half of the \$52 billion is going to fossil fuels. So please explain that.

Ms. POWER. Half of whose?

Mrs. WAGNER. Of—I am telling you that the energy infrastructure grew by a factor of 10 and more than half of the \$52 billion in energy loans issued by China's two main development finance institutions were allocated for fossil fuels.

Ms. POWER. I know you're talking specifically about Africa. So I would just—I don't know if you've seen the African Union's strategy on energy which came out, which basically puts the pursuit of clean energy at the center of it, and that is in line with what we hear from our African partners all the time.

Not for some ideological reason or because they're woke but because—

Mrs. WAGNER. Why is natural gas on table?

Ms. POWER [continuing]. Affordable energy and the prices of solar and other clean energy solutions.

Mrs. WAGNER. Why is natural gas off the table?

Ms. POWER. It's not off the table. Again, it's part of—I could come back to your staff and share with you some of the funding that we have done particularly, as you know, to render other forms of energy more stable. Sometimes that's part of the solution.

Mrs. WAGNER. We'd like that because all they want is electricity and they're using it by fossil fuels.

Ms. POWER. They want electricity and in some instances, many of the places we work, which are very remote areas which don't have a chance of getting connected to the grid soon, a pop-up solar installation can be the only hope of a community—

Mrs. WAGNER. Let me—let me move on.

Ms. POWER [continuing]. Actually getting access to electricity.

Mrs. WAGNER. Let me move on. The administration has contributed \$1 billion toward the Just Energy Transition Partnership, JETP, in South Africa, which plans to transition the South African power grid toward clean energy solutions by paying owners to close their coal plants earlier than otherwise—than they otherwise would.

Today, coal-fired power plants provide over 80 percent of South Africa's electricity and with the current energy crisis plaguing the country the South African people view the JETP very unfavorably.

How do you respond to African governments who view this administration's refusal to support any nongreen energy projects as hypocritical?

Ms. POWER. So as it happens I attended President Biden's bilateral meeting with President Ramaphosa of South Africa where he asked what we could do to accelerate the implementation of JETP and where additional resources could be provided to hasten the transition.

So, again, we're just, I guess, maybe hearing from different constituencies.

Mrs. WAGNER. Eighty percent of South Africa's electricity is coal fired.

Ms. POWER. And they recognize the emissions effects, the health effects, and ultimately the need to begin to transition workers to other forms of labor.

Mrs. WAGNER. They don't like J—they don't like it one bit. My time has expired. But I very much need a meeting with you, ma'am, because I want to go over some of these specific—

Ms. POWER. As the chairman attested I'm happy to give you my cell phone. We can talk later this evening.

Mrs. WAGNER. That's awesome.

Ms. POWER. I'm very eager to dig into the details of these remarks.

Mrs. WAGNER. I appreciate it and I yield back to the chair.

Chairman MCCAUL. Sounds like a date.

The gentlelady yields.

Ms. POWER. I can't wait.

Chairman MCCAUL. The chair recognizes Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Are you sure that I'm in order for now? I just didn't want to take anyone else's time.

I just want to address that. Thank you for being here, Administrator. I wanted to—am I right? That's what I thought. Okay.

Ms. WILD. Can we restart my time?

Chairman MCCAUL. I will reset the clock and my apologies.

Ms. WILD. No problem.

Chairman MCCAUL. Ms. Wild is recognized.

Ms. WILD. Thank you very much.

Administrator Power, thank you so much for being here today. I appreciate your service and your time today. Last week, I led a letter to Speaker Johnson on the critical need to include humanitarian aid in any supplemental package that we consider in the House, aid for Gaza as well as aid to other deeply vulnerable areas around the world.

First, let me just ask as a preface would you agree that humanitarian aid also functions as an investment in our own national security?

Ms. POWER. Yes, because I think as awful and messed up as so many situations are right now for civilians imagine people being taken off the rolls for being able to get a voucher or access to some small amount of food.

Where do they go? Where do young men go? What are the other opportunities for them? And if I could just do one—I know you have many more questions.

But the word supplemental when it comes to humanitarian assistance is a little bit of a misnomer.

Ms. WILD. I agree. What would you prefer to see used?

Ms. POWER. Well, let me explain why it's a misnomer first, which is simply that our base humanitarian assistance were moved into the very generous Ukraine supplementals for the rest of the world.

So when we—what has happened is the supplementals have become the place where people have sought to put a large share of

our humanitarian assistance. So if we don't get a supplemental it's not just that we're not getting new money—supplemental money to deal with Sudan, a new war that happened between this year and last, or Gaza, which started on October 7th.

It is that we are not even where we would have been—we'd be down a third from last year. Basically, we have 40 percent more needs and 40 percent less resources.

Ms. WILD. Okay. I get your point. We need to—I agree with you and I've noted that problem. Last year, I had the opportunity to see the devastating impact of hunger particularly on children when I traveled to Kenya, and saw USAID and the World Food Programme in action and I was especially impressed by the importance of these ready to use therapeutic food.

The acronym is RUTF, which is not a particularly great acronym. But anyway and it says right on it U.S. aid from the American people for children with severe acute malnutrition, and I learned amazing things about this little package including that this provides enough caloric intake for a child for 1 day.

And my question to you is what needs to be done to ensure that these are more widely available? Now, granted, this is not a full, you know, complete complement of nutrition and so forth but it certainly helps a lot in curbing child hunger.

Is that true?

Ms. POWER. Absolutely. We launched an unprecedented investment in RUTF 2 years ago at the General Assembly and got other countries not only to match the several hundred million—the \$200 million that we invested but to go beyond that.

That has helped because supply chains, of course, depend on predictability and advance notice. So knowing there were going to be these big bulk orders has made it more readily available because there were some bottlenecks in the supply.

Ms. WILD. Can I stop you for 1 second? Are these being used in Gaza?

Ms. POWER. They are a part of the WFP UNICEF convoys and are getting in there but we need to scale them, given the degree of malnutrition. Their exact—I was—actually that was going to be my next point is this is precisely what we need to reach those kids under five who have severe acute malnutrition now.

Ms. WILD. And are there enough of these being made or do we need to scale up the production of these?

Ms. POWER. Well, everything is—unfortunately, it comes back a little bit to resources. People aren't going to make them if they're not going to be purchased so we need to mobilize more resources for humanitarian assistance generally of which this is a critical subset.

Ms. WILD. And I assume the distribution of them as well. Is that right?

Ms. POWER. The distribution, I think we have the networks through WFP and UNICEF to ensure that, again, if we have the resources to purchase them, if we have the resources to take care of—

Ms. WILD. Even in Gaza?

Ms. POWER. Oh, access is critical in Gaza, yes. Sorry.

Ms. WILD. That's what we need, distribution. Okay.

Ms. POWER. I thought you mean globally. Yes.

Ms. WILD. Okay. I'm going to really be quick on this last one. I want to talk about the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and specifically Section 620(I) which provides that no foreign assistance will be provided to any country which prohibits or otherwise restricts the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance.

Are you aware of any U.S.-provided humanitarian assistance that is being restricted by the Israeli government?

Ms. POWER. Well, I think President Biden has been clear that there have been significant restrictions that have impeded delivery and we are trying to work those through and have made, again, accelerated progress in recent days—you know, customs restrictions, things that have left assistance, for example, flour sitting in a port that could be in Gaza.

So we are trying, again, through our diplomatic engagements and the kind of pressure that President Biden has been exerting for many months to get more assistance in.

Ms. WILD. Do those rise to the levels of violations of 620(I) or not to that level?

Ms. POWER. My understanding this is something that Secretary Blinken is managing and you'll have a chance, I'm sure, to engage him on. But the National Security Memorandum 20 that was issued not long ago is taking 620(I) and those elements into consideration. I think that report is due out in early May.

Ms. WILD. Thank you very much. Thank you for your indulgence, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Chairman McCAUL. The gentlelady yields.

The chair recognizes Mr. Kean.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you to Administrator Power for being with us today.

I'm going to start with a general question. Investments in global health research and development not only help the United States develop innovative solutions to global health challenges across the world but also invest dollars back into the American private sector, into research institutions alike.

In New Jersey alone over \$1.5 billion has been invested into research institutions and nearly 20,000 new jobs have been created. What specific programs in global health generate R&D investments in U.S.—our industry and also in research institutions?

Ms. POWER. Well, I would—just since we're coming out not that long ago from COVID, you know, take note of the 700 million vaccines that were made here, purchased by the United States and given away for free—huge soft power in that but also that's American companies and workers are benefiting from that.

I think we see—you know, I mean, I think about it, of course, from the standpoint of protecting, you know, the health and safety of Americans by investing in surveillance and labs and the like but a lot of the research partnerships that the United States—that USAID has with American universities also are not only on, you know, seeds and agricultural related innovation but also in the health sector and I'm happy to have Atul Gawande come and brief you on the specifics.

Mr. KEAN. I would appreciate that. Thank you.

Regarding Ukraine, the United States has provided \$22.9 billion from direct budget to help Ukraine meet the emergency needs of its citizens. What kind of oversight procedures are in place to ensure that this assistance is not subject to waste, fraud, and abuse?

Ms. POWER. Very extensive. We started very early on when this direct budget support began to flow, which is provided only for verified expenditures through the West Bank. So those expenditures have to be verified before the money flows. It's not like you hand over a check for a billion dollars every month and it goes from there.

But we brought Deloitte on in order to do spot checks across the various ministries that were receiving these funds, the funds, of course, going to first responders, to teachers, to health workers and health services.

We have just done a big open source contract and awarded a contract, I should say, to KPMG to do an audit of all of the direct budget support. OIG has—our Inspector General has significantly ramped up the staff working on oversight specifically of direct budget support including in Kyiv.

Mr. KEAN. Have you—excuse me, has USAID begun to implement OIG's recommendation calling for an action plan to verify the accuracy of expenditure reports for health care workers?

Ms. POWER. Yes, and thank you for mentioning that. Notwithstanding the title of the report, actually in the report itself it talks about the remedial steps that USAID has already taken to address what amounted to—I don't want to call it clerical errors but errors in how we were actually verifying or gaps—let me put it that way—in how we were doing the verification on salaries specifically. But as soon as that was brought to our attention it is something we smothered and addressed which the report testifies to.

Mr. KEAN. Okay. And all U.S.-provided DBS to Ukraine has been in the form of grants?

Ms. POWER. Correct.

Mr. KEAN. And why has USAID not structured its direct budget support to Ukraine as loans?

Ms. POWER. I'd say two main reasons. One, given Ukraine's budget challenges in light of Putin's aggression the cost of a dollar of a loan is likely to be somewhere between 80 cents and a dollar. So the benefit for the taxpayer—

Mr. KEAN. But if it was forgivable, for example?

Ms. POWER. But would come—say that again.

Mr. KEAN. If it's forgivable.

Ms. POWER. If it was—

Mr. KEAN [continuing]. As others—you know, as many European Union nations when they do their direct budgeting.

Ms. POWER. Yes. So then—

Mr. KEAN. They're forgivable from the very beginning.

Ms. POWER. Correct, and the way the Europeans have structured them, again, as, you know, low interest and, you know, multi years into the future payment recycles.

But the second reason is that, you know, programs like the nearly \$16 billion IMF program are contingent on a certain amount of capital and liquidity in Ukraine itself and that IMF investment, which was very unusual for the IMF to operate in a war zone at

that scale, was also presumed the continuation, again, of the degree of liquidity that we and the Europeans and the Japanese and others have been able to provide.

So I think there'll be significant shortcomings. Having said that, we have to get direct budget support to Ukraine. Our partners have front loaded a lot of the assistance, still hoping that this vote is going to occur, still hoping that these resources are going to flow.

And, again, I think it's worth recalling, as you make this point so often, Putin is not only trying to take over Ukraine militarily, having failed to do that because of the courage of Ukrainians and the security assistance we have provided, he is trying to destroy the economy and the State, and that State going bankrupt, the morale consequences of having no teachers paid in schools or not being able to get health care because of Putin's aggression the ripple effects of that and the gift to Putin of depriving Ukraine of those resources it really can't be overstated.

Mr. KEAN. Thank you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Ms. Titus.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator Power, thank you for being here. As I know you know that Ugandan constitutional court has, largely, upheld the country's really draconian anti-homosexuality act and they've allowed the criminalization of aggravated homosexuality punished by the death penalty.

This is now to be the law of the land and it's already resulted in many, many human rights violations including 180 forced evictions and 176 cases of torture. Unfortunately, this is kind of a current pattern that we're seeing, a larger trend and abuse of LGBT rights.

My bill the GLOBE Act would reaffirm U.S. position as a leader in championing human rights and we have put sanctions or penalties on countries like Uganda that trample on those rights.

I wonder if you could talk about how USAID works to prevent violence and human rights abuses like we're seeing in vulnerable communities like in Uganda and speak about the importance of our USAID programs that respond to violence and stigma and discrimination against the LGBTQ community.

Ms. POWER. Thank you so much. Yes, it's an extremely disturbing law and an extremely disappointing court ruling. Let me just maybe just step for a second outside of your question and note the deleterious health effects on the Ugandan population writ large by virtue of the passage of the anti-homosexuality act.

It is not only LGBTQI+ individuals who are afraid to come forward, for example, to receive their anti-retrovirals but it is also people who aren't a member of that community for fear of being tagged and criminalized and potentially arrested by virtue of association, for example, with the PEPFAR program.

So we have seen, you know, a dramatic decrease in uptake of life-saving services as a result of the passage of this law. We have also seen—and this is something, you know, that also happened because of a business warning put out or business advisory put out by the State Department—but, you know, private sector invest-

ment, foreign direct investment in Uganda, going down—companies that might have been tempted to set up shop there nervous about their employees and the fate of their employees.

So while I haven't seen a good study showing the measurement, again, of the broader ripple effects there's no question that the law has done health harm and economic harm to the people of Uganda even outside that community.

I think, you know, we are trying to be nimble and our team on the ground has just done an incredible job doing small grants but also PEPFAR I really would applaud for thinking through what this new penalty, as it were, for being part of the LGBTQI community or for seeking PEPFAR treatment means so much more discreet forms of delivery, for example, for medicines so that people are able to get access to their medicines in a manner that makes them feel safe, for example, going to a kind of neutral mailbox, a lockbox of a sort, rather than going into a PEPFAR clinic.

So these are the kinds of accommodations we have to make in order to try to ensure as best we can that people keep seeking the support that they need in order to be able to live healthy lives even as their dignity is trampled by this law and its enforcement.

Ms. TITUS. Do you see this spreading as it seems to me in other countries and addressing it there in similar ways?

Ms. POWER. I mean, certainly, as you know, there's pending legislation in a number of African countries and there is—it is an issue that when times are tough economically or governments feel under pressure or public pressure because they're not seem to be delivering this is an issue that has tended to be demagogued. This is a community that has tended to be blamed, you know, through history but certainly in recent history.

So we worry about that a lot. We do a ton of diplomacy. We do a lot of contingency planning and programming and we take the cue of the communities that are most vulnerable in terms of understanding how best to combine public and private diplomacy.

Ms. TITUS. So this is yet another front where you're out there with this soft diplomacy and this real assistance and helping it on all levels?

Ms. POWER. Trying.

Ms. TITUS. Thank you. I yield back.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentlelady yields.

Mr. Barr is recognized.

Mr. BARR. Thank you, Mr. Chairman and Ranking Member, for holding the hearing and Administrator Power, thank you for your service and also thank you for your responsiveness with my constituent Joe Montgomery in Lexington, Kentucky, and his company Square One Technology who is seeking to provide water purification systems in Kenya.

Can you share USAID's goal for water purification in Africa and the benefits to U.S. foreign policy to have U.S.-made water purification systems provide this capability to countries across Africa?

Ms. POWER. Well, I can say that the Water for the World Act is celebrating its anniversary this year and we are shifting to working with municipalities and utility companies at the center, so not just building pipes but really looking at standards, standards that then could lend themselves, for example, to the embrace of U.S. tech-

nology without weighing in on any particular firm because we do open procurement and the like and competitive bidding processes and so forth.

But absolutely, as I was saying in my opening statement, when we can secure regulatory changes on the ground often it is done in a manner that allows first movers like those in the United States who have benefited from those technologies sooner to be able to take advantage of those opportunities.

So as we shift, again, to this emphasis on municipalities reform and embrace of new technologies at the center rather than just all the work out in the rural areas and so forth on piping and sanitation that should create opportunities along the lines of what you're describing.

Mr. BARR. And I think in addition to the humanitarian pull of this project there's a strategic value in providing that soft power overture to places in Africa where Belt and Road is alive and well and where we can counter with USAID efforts.

Administrator Power, in March the U.N. Security Council embarrassed itself by passing a resolution calling for a cease-fire in Gaza that was not directly tied to the release of innocent hostages currently held by Hamas terrorists.

Instead of providing the moral leadership and clarity the moment required by voting against that resolution the United States abstained. Among the countries voting for a cease-fire, however, were several countries who receive U.S. assistance—Mozambique, who last year received \$469 million from USAID, Ecuador who received \$46.5 million from USAID, Sierra Leone, who last year received \$29.5 million from USAID, to name a few.

These are countries that will happily take money from the U.S. taxpayer and yet openly vote against our interests in international bodies like the United Nations.

How is USAID being strategic with its foreign assistance, ensuring that our assistance aligns with our strategic allies?

Ms. POWER. Well, I think assistance decisions, which are influenced heavily by the strictures that come to us in our appropriations bills regionally and sectorally—we are 90 percent earmarked by sector. But that doesn't—and there's significant earmarks by region but your question is still very valid.

I would just say there are a number of factors and I would take maybe the countries that you've mentioned—Sierra Leone, you know, this was a place that was nearly felled by the Ebola epidemic.

A lot of the investments we have made in Sierra Leone are in the health sector in order to give them better surveillance, lab capability, and the like.

As we saw in the Ebola epidemic in West Africa, those investments are incredibly important to preventing something like that from happening again. We all remember the panic here in this country when we had our first Ebola case, which happened to be from Liberia.

Mozambique—most of those investments are in the public health sector, again, on TB, on global health security, on HIV, and Ecuador, the narco trafficking collaboration that we are doing, you know, has great bearing as well for our own security.

So I'm only saying that there are factors and it has to be a composite assessment.

Mr. BARR. I understand, and just reclaiming my time.

And you make—you answered the question persuasively and you make the point about compartmentalization and we're achieving objectives.

But I am curious whether or not USAID coordinates with our U.N. Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield in using the soft power of USAID to provide a little additional leverage for our interests at the United Nations because we're doing some very generous and positive things for these people but they are not demonstrating a reciprocal appreciation for that assistance on a strategic level and I would like to see USAID maybe exercise a little additional muscle in that regard.

Ms. POWER. I think, certainly, having had the job that Ambassador Thomas-Greenfield has, you know, there's probably no better partnership between a U.N. Ambassador and a USAID administrator than a former U.N. Ambassador and I think, you know, she's done a very good job bringing that broader context to bear.

At the same time, I will tell you having had her job we are also consistently going into other countries and asking them to do a whole set of things for us and as we don't win every one of these votes and Israel in particular is an area where there's a lot of voting divergence with some countries that we work with really well on other issues.

But when it comes to showing up against Russian aggression in Ukraine or to join a statement, you know, which is getting harder but condemning the genocide against the Uyghurs in the PRC we are going back in again and again.

And so, you know, I think, to look at the broad voting convergence is something that I used to do when I was in her job and I know she does every day to see where is a country or how are they shifting—is there a moment of opportunity where they're shifting more in our direction, and that's something we have actually seen with Ecuador over the course of the last four or 5 years.

Mr. BARR. Thank you for your response there and, you know, not just with Israel, not just with Ukraine, but also Taiwan. So with that, I yield.

Chairman MCCAUL. The gentleman yields.

The chair recognizes Mr. Jackson.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Thank you very much. Thank you for your leadership and your service, Honorable Ms. Power, and thank you for understanding that people that need food can also maintain their dignity and have their conscience and speak their mind, and I appreciate you not weaponizing the resource of food that we have been blessed with so abundantly, that we do have friends, and in every family we can have disagreements and we can come back together. So not weaponizing food is a major concern.

I have a concern about the use of food right now in the Gaza Strip, and are you satisfied with the resources that we have that are going to stop starvation? This is a period of, indeed, of fasting that now has turned into famine. What are the political implications of us not getting food in there that can be unintended?

Ms. POWER. Well, first, let me just say we need to pass the national security supplemental. Recall that the 1924 budget, which, again, presumes a national security supplemental does not have in it enough humanitarian assistance to keep us even close to flat.

We'd be down 30 percent from where we were last year and needs—and 50 percent from where we were 2 years ago because of the Ukraine supplementals providing that plus-up for the rest of the world.

So we need resources. But to your point I think President Biden has been really, really clear that there have been too many restrictions, too many delays, not enough points of access. You know, we did air drops. We are doing air drops. We are trying to build a maritime pier.

But nobody thinks that those are solutions to reaching the food needs of more than 2 million people. We need sustained land access including to the north, including through new checkpoints and crossing points.

So a series of commitments, I will say, over the last few days have been made but there's just not a minute to spare in seeing the implementation of those commitments and that's what's important.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Administrator Power, when have you last heard of airdrops being used to supply some humanitarian food assistance?

Ms. POWER. Well, I mean, humanitarians are always——

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Food air drops.

Ms. POWER. Humanitarians are always very reluctant to use airdrops because they're very imprecise. They don't come in in bulk. You know, our airdrops, for example, have meals ready to eat. They're a last resort, and they were needed in Gaza because there was insufficient land access.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Are there any other——

Ms. POWER. Yes. I mean, we have had to use them in Deir Ezzor, in Syria. I started my career in Bosnia where they were used in eastern Bosnia because of the Serb encirclement of Bosnian towns.

They are used but they're more expensive, less efficient, less, of course, scaled by definition than what we always need and what people deserve, which is land access—sustained land access, not only to prevent famine, which of course we must do. That's a, you know, five-alarm fire.

But you mentioned in your comments, I mean, to be able to live with some form of dignity, not, you know, rushing against a convoy because you think it might be the last truck that ever comes to town with food for your kids. You know, that is not what we as humanitarians believe is a sound humanitarian approach.

But for that to change there have to, again, be more than just the Kerem Shalom crossing. But the Erez Crossing has to be opened. The hours have to be extended even more than they have. A corridor from Jordan is now being built. We can get these numbers way up.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. If I can ask in—reclaiming my time.

The Sudan crisis is something that's not given much attention to but I'd like to conclude with a crisis closer to home regarding Haiti.

What is the condition of the food conditions in Haiti and what can we do about it?

Ms. POWER. Well, again, you know, it's really important to get the security support police from Kenya deployed to Haiti because the biggest impediment to delivery in Haiti is gang violence and is the, you know, needs of humanitarians to be able to safely not only pass through particular neighborhoods but also to be able to alert communities that the food is available and for those communities to know they can come and safely access those resources and the gangs have made that harder.

So we are getting food and even fuel in and moving but it is nowhere near what it was, you know, even 6 months ago and even then I think we all would have said it is insufficient, and because the economy has shut down and so many businesses, for example, you know, even American companies that had worked in Haiti have had to pull out because of the insecurity.

A larger and larger share of the Haitian people are now dependent on humanitarian assistance. But there's no answer without security and political transition as well.

Mr. JACKSON OF ILLINOIS. Well, I thank you very much for your generosity, your consistency, and I just find it hard to believe that the world's greatest military is being deterred and put in standoff in Haiti by a gentleman named Barbecue, gang violence, and we have a military and they have gangs and we cannot penetrate.

I yield back my time. Thank you, Chairman.

Mr. SELF [presiding]. Thank you. I recognize the gentleman from New Jersey, Mr. Smith.

Mr. SMITH. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Ambassador, great to see you again. Just a couple of things.

First of all, thanks for underscoring that the PRC is the world's largest debt collector. I chaired a hearing in this room just a couple of hours ago and it was about the malign influence of China on the U.N. and one of the things we pointed out in the hearing was that we provided \$18 billion in 2022 to the United Nations and its related agencies like WFP and others.

And what did China do? Two billion. I mean, when it comes to the voluntary we have an assessment of \$3 billion. Fifteen billion of the \$18 billion is voluntary and there seems to be a gross under appreciation of that by people at the United Nations and elsewhere.

So that was brought forward in our hearing this morning but thank you for your point about the debt collector. Let me just ask you about the pause.

Obviously, the—to UNRWA aid is that investigation still ongoing, especially in light of what has happened vis-a-vis the appropriations bill which precludes funding to UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. As you know, the State Department funds UNRWA, not USAID, although our partners work through UNRWA because they are the distribution system.

Yes, I believe the two investigations—you'd have to check with State—but are ongoing, one on the specific individuals and the 12 to 15 individuals against whom the Israelis presented these allegations.

The second, the independent investigation from outside, is on the policies and procedures around vetting such that, you know, allegations of this gravity, you know, could be possible or that individuals conceivably could work for UNRWA and be perpetrating crimes like the horrors of October 7th. But both, to my understanding, are ongoing.

Mr. SMITH. But I know you will have some input, obviously, since so much of what you humanitarian wise. But I would ask you, in 2003 I offered an amendment to the Foreign Affairs—Foreign Relations Act, passed the House, that the money should not go to UNRWA.

We knew then what a malign influence they were on children, child abuse really, teaching Palestinian kids to hate Jewish people and Israel and the United States, and a bill that I have that this committee passed as well just a few weeks ago doing the same thing and, of course, the full House and Senate have joined in on that as well.

So I would hope that the top to bottom look at UNRWA and the due diligence to ensure us that like-minded UNRWA types don't just get the money and we find out that someone who used to work for UNRWA is now becoming the facilitator of that aid with the same basket of hate filled anti-Semitism that UNRWA has.

Ms. POWER. I mean, you know, I think all organizations operating in such a complex environment as Gaza, of course, are horrified by what appears to have emerged—again, we'll await the findings.

But I do think it's important and I don't know, Congressman, if in your prior efforts to defund UNRWA any distinction was drawn. But, you know, you also have UNRWA operating in Jordan and you have the king of Jordan, you know, making abundantly clear that at a time of great instability when Jordan is a great partner to the United States—USAID has one of its biggest missions there—but for Jordan to suddenly have to take over the schooling of 2 million kids of Palestinian descent would be, you know, something that they are not capable of doing.

And, you know, in Gaza as well the work of those 13,000, you know, humanitarians who are teachers, who are health workers, you know, you know well because you've been in so many of these countries we don't have an NGO out there or another—this is not your traditional U.N. agency where you can have, like, schools in a box—you know, teachers in a box, health workers in a box.

They were almost—like, Hamas was the State and Hamas won the election back in the day and Hamas, you know, obviously, had far too much influence on certain individuals or even certain individuals who were it seems like potentially part of Hamas.

But the fact is the administration of schools and health systems was UNRWA and there's not an NGO or another U.N. agency that could perform the function of a State like that, or at least I haven't encountered one in my years of humanitarian service.

Mr. SMITH. I would hope that every effort will be made to do so. Let me ask you, finally, you know, there's been a great deal of concern about PEPFAR and what the administration did to integrate promoting abortion.

I mean, I sat right here a couple seats away when Henry Hyde led the effort in 2003 to enact PEPFAR, a tremendous bill. I did the reauthorization of it the last time for 5 years but we had protections, pro-life protections to ensure that it stayed on point on trying to mitigate and end the pandemic of HIV/AIDS.

Can you assure us that the NGO's that are getting the money, especially pursuant to the guidance that has been given to them by the administration—I have a copy of the guidance—as well as reimagining PEPFAR that they're not promoting abortion?

Ms. POWER. What I can assure you of is that USAID follows the law. PEPFAR follows the law. USAID does not fund abortions. PEPFAR has saved 25 million lives.

Mr. SMITH. I know that and I'm——

Ms. POWER. But the amount of misinformation about PEPFAR——

Mr. SMITH. But providing moneys to NGO's——

Ms. POWER [continuing]. That's being propagated is so unfair——

Mr. SMITH. With respect——

Ms. POWER [continuing]. To the people who have saved those lives that you have seen in the field working.

Mr. SMITH. I've been out in the field. But the problem is that we have given them a dual mission to bring down pro-life laws. It's right in the guidance that has been tendered to all the——

Ms. POWER. That is false.

Mr. SMITH. It's right there in black and white. I'll put it in the record. Thank you.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentlelady from California, Ms. Jacobs.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Administrator Power, for being here and for all of your work in what I know is incredibly difficult global challenges right now.

I first wanted to ask you about your localization agenda that I was so excited when you announced. I was really proud that this committee last month passed my locally led development and humanitarian Response Act on a bipartisan basis which would institutionalize reforms that would make it easier for USAID to work with local partners.

Can you discuss how this bill would enable USAID to work more with local organizations?

Ms. POWER. Well, thank you. I sometimes feel like you know more about localization than I do so I feel like I should defer. But this has been a huge priority. As you know, we're making these giant investments.

We do not want our investments and the good that they do to end when large international organizations or contracting partners depart or when a contract or a grant expires.

So I think accessibility is one of the things that your bill has emphasized—you know, translating requests for proposals into multiple languages. I think, you know, artificial intelligence and ChatGPT, you know, are going to make it more easy for local organizations to understand what we're looking for and to respond.

Raising the *de minimis* rate for assistance to 15 percent would mean that these small organizations who don't have the big accounting firms and the lawyers, you know, to compete for our as-

sistance get some overhead and, you know, have the ability as well to invest in their own capacity.

And then we're still working on SAM registration which you have emphasized as well, making that easier. You know, I've been in a situation where a war breaks out or Putin does something horrible and we see a local organization that we would love to work with but the barriers to entry through the SAM process are just too high.

And then, last, what I—also incredibly grateful for potentially allowing the restriction of competition to local organizations for acquisition. We can already do that for assistance but to extend that to acquisition is really important. So grateful for all.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. I now want to turn to the dire situation in Sudan.

I just returned from the Chad-Sudanese border where I heard directly from Sudanese refugees about the terrible situation that they are fleeing. You know, April 15th will be 1 year since the war started. We see 25 million people need aid. Tens of millions of people have been forced from their homes.

Without the supplemental passing U.S. humanitarian assistance faces a 40 percent cut and we heard that the World Food Programme may be unable to serve any Sudanese refugees in Chad starting this month.

Can you discuss the challenges to humanitarian funding and access in Sudan right now and what no supplemental would mean for the Sudanese people?

Ms. POWER. Well, last year, thanks to the generosity of people here and the taxpayer, we were able—we, USAID, were able to provide \$600 million in funding, which is, you know, I'm really proud that we were able to do that but also horrified that a country that is entirely capable of feeding itself and a population that's immensely educated and dynamic, you know, is stuck because of these two fighters—you know, military men who decided to put their own lust for power above the welfare of their people.

The U.S. Government as a whole gave close to a billion dollars and invested that in just keeping people alive. You know, this is not—this is no way to live, let me put it that way.

But even with those resources both Hemedti and General Burhan have imposed abominable restrictions on our humanitarian aid partners. I mean, whether it's, you know, delaying visas or, you know, having these long convoys of resources where there are starving people, you know, just up ahead and refusing to allow those convoys to pass, you know, this is something, again, that we raise again and again.

Special Envoy Perriello now has taken up this charge full time and engaging with both parties has been, again, modest progress in getting at least some access. But to lose the supplemental means falling off a cliff and if Perriello, if the U.N.—new U.N. Special Envoy are able to press and secure access how tragic would it be that we finally get the access we need and then don't have the resources to actually fund WFP or UNICEF.

Ms. JACOBS. Absolutely. And just in my remaining time I just want to say, you know, I know Ms. Wild asked you about 620(I).

My reading of the National Security Memorandum 20 is that it actually has a different standard.

The standard is that not only does our partner country have to not inhibit aid but actually has to facilitate and not arbitrarily deny the delivery of any U.S.-supported international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance.

Would you say that given your experience right now that Israel is in compliance in facilitating the delivery of U.S.-supported international efforts to provide humanitarian assistance?

Ms. POWER. Well, first, I would say that I think 620(I) is covered by the higher standard in the National Security Memorandum. So I think that's what is meant and, again, the secretary is managing that process. USAID has provided input on that question but we'll have to await the report in early May.

A number of commitments have been made. They need to be implemented with haste.

Ms. JACOBS. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Mr. SELF. Thank you. I recognize the gentleman from South Carolina, Mr. Wilson.

Mr. WILSON. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator, I appreciate—I'm so grateful for your service. I always—one of the highlights of my service is going around the world to see USAID programs successful.

One that I just will never forget in a very rural area of Afghanistan to see a sign with the clasped hands of the flag of Afghanistan and the United States, and it was a rusty sign indicating the location of a school that had been built.

And the rusty sign indicated to me that anybody could have taken it down anytime but they didn't. They were appreciative of what was done one on one to help people.

And then in the Middle East I'm so grateful for your immediate aid to the people of Turkey. With the recent earthquake in southeastern Turkey with the critical facilities at Incirlik Americans acted immediately with your leadership to provide assistance to the victims.

And we so appreciate this vital NATO ally. We so appreciate the democracy of Turkey. We are all celebrating a hundred years of Turkish democracy and 75 years of NATO membership. Turkey is a shining beacon of hope for the—and success for the region.

And recently I visited in August Ankara and Istanbul and the advances of the Turkish people with a very vibrant and very appreciated Turkish-American community is so meaningful, and so thank you for what you've done for the people of Turkey.

Additionally, I'm concerned and the opposite—the dictatorship of Assad in Syria. The White Helmets are one of the best and only volunteers of civilian humanitarian organizations operating in the non-Assad regime areas.

Every day they respond to assaults on villages and civilian infrastructure by the Assad regime and its puppet master of the regime of the war criminal Putin. They provide life-saving medical aid to children with horrific wounds and operate in the absolute worst of conditions.

Following the catastrophic earthquake, again, the earthquake that struck both Syria and Turkey the White Helmets immediately mobilized and were able to save hundreds of lives.

It's really sad but it has come to my attention there are cuts proposed in the already modest budget from \$7 million to \$3 million for Fiscal Year 1925.

We have asked for a clarification. What is the commitment? What will be done?

Ms. POWER. I mean, I'm in awe of the White Helmets and have been since they first came to my attention, I think, back in 2012 probably was the first time I learned of their unbelievable bravery.

They then became the target of mass Putin misinformation in a way that, you know, affected my work at the U.N. because we had to spend a lot of time truth telling about what the White Helmets actually did, and it's been a great source of pride for me at USAID.

In fact, after the earthquake to make one of our first grants, because of the exchange I've just had with Congresswoman Jacobs you might understand that giving a grant to a local organization is quite hard because USAID is sort of hard to work with. We have a lot of bureaucracy, a lot of compliance requests.

But we were able to speed the paperwork and get resources out the door. I will look at the cut. It may just be that that is part—because you're bringing that to my attention that that is part of the broader cut because our assistance is down—our humanitarian assistance is down 40 percent and needs are up 40 percent. So that just may be part of the overall cut across the board.

Mr. SMITH. Administrator, I am so grateful you know who they are, you know how significant it is and, gosh, the helping the people of Syria, help the people in Turkey too with the cross border earthquake and it just would be so helpful to have funding sufficient for their actions to resist war criminal Putin and the dictatorship—murderous dictatorship of Assad.

Another issue we have with UNRWA in light of the UNRWA employees involved, clearly, by video on October 7th I'm grateful that there has been an effort to block funding to them. What is USAID doing to increase your own capacity to provide humanitarian aid to Gaza but not relying on the U.N.?

Ms. POWER. Well, there's UNRWA and then there's the rest of the U.N. family. As it happens it's the State Department that funds UNRWA but our main partners are organizations like the World Food Programme, which is also a U.N. agency, UNICEF, Save the Children, International Medical Corps—the distribution network, the trucks, the workers who are there en masse coming from—

Mr. WILSON. And my time is up but I do want to congratulate your working with the World Food Programme formerly led by Nobel Laureate, former Governor of South Carolina David Beasley. Thank you very much.

Ms. POWER. Indeed. Thank you, sir.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from Minnesota, Mr. Phillips.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Welcome, Administrator Power, and heartfelt gratitude to you, to everybody at USAID, for what you do, how you do it, the impor-

tance to humanity and also to building the American brand, which I think you do beautifully.

I want to support so many of my colleagues' contention that we must pass the Senate supplemental bill with \$10 billion for emergency aid, and along with our chairman, Mr. Wilson, who's leaving—I'm the ranking member of the Middle East, North Africa, and Central Asia Subcommittee, so I'm going to direct a few questions about that region to you starting with Lebanon.

The World Bank, of course, has described the circumstances there has some of the worst since the mid 19th century. The currency has been devalued 98 percent. Lebanese people have about 4 hours of electricity per day.

A million Lebanese children do not have access to quality education and, of course, there are about a million and a half Syrian refugees putting a lot of strain on the very few services available in Lebanon.

The Economic Support Fund request includes, of course, a targeted increase for Lebanon but I'd welcome some perspective from you on what you're seeing there and the role of USAID in supporting the Lebanese and Syrian refugees.

Ms. POWER. Well, just in brief, I'm sure you have other questions but, you know, we can't—in answering this question a year ago we would talk about many of the same conditions that you described but we now have on top of it the really significant escalation in clashes between Lebanon and Israel and fairly significant displacement within—additional displacement within Lebanon of Lebanese, some people being displaced for a second or third time.

So, again, we need the supplemental because we need the humanitarian resources to be able to fund the organizations and the trusted partners who would go out and meet humanitarian needs.

But stepping back to the more evergreen issue of Lebanese politics we also need, you know, government formation and stable transition and, you know, the private sector and others to be able to know that Lebanon's governance and its rule of law are sound.

And so that is where in addition to, you know, providing tactical economic counsel at a time of relative economic unraveling for the economy we are also as a government, as a whole, you know, really pushing for the tough political decisions that haven't been made in really now quite some number of years.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Can you speak to anything USAID is doing right now on the ground?

Ms. POWER. I mean, providing humanitarian assistance to the newly displaced of whom I think there are more than—close to 200,000 people who have been displaced we're doing a lot on electrification. As you know, power—you drive through Lebanon now and it's—

Mr. PHILLIPS. A few hours a day?

Ms. POWER. So, you know, when I visited recently we were, you know, working with local communities and private investors to stand up solar off grid in the Beqaa Valley and elsewhere because there are parts that have not been connected with the grid.

That in turn is beneficial both to the Lebanese host communities but also to the Syrian refugees so for them to see—the Lebanese host communities to see some benefit accruing or more inter-

national attention being lent when they've opened their homes and the strain of the demands on their infrastructure are certainly showing.

So those are some examples. But, again, the political and the economic and the security all go together—three legs of the triangle.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. And moving to another challenge, Tunisia, I know President Saied is overseeing backsliding and erosion of civil society and I know we're limiting our direct bilateral support.

But I would welcome your perspective also on Tunisia, what role you are playing right now and what we should be and can be doing.

Ms. POWER. Well, I mean, it goes without saying that the checks and balances, notwithstanding the effort to centralize power and to chill speech and dissent our support for those players who are still out there bravely standing up for the Tunisian democracy that they dreamed of and worked so hard to try to put in place that support is really important.

You know, just stepping back, though, I will say that cuts across the board to our development assistance in the 1924 bill, cuts that are, you know, going to be to our development assistance account, roughly, 10 percent are going to take a toll on even that vital democracy rights and governance support.

So at just the time that we see democratic backsliding we want to be in a position to surge support for those who are contesting it. Instead, that is going to become more challenging because of the cuts.

Mr. PHILLIPS. Okay. I'm running out of time. I was going to ask you also about the Syrian camps Al Hol and Roj but I think I'm out of time, unfortunately.

So thank you. I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Issa.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you, Chairman.

Ambassador, good to see you again. Why is it you take the toughest job there is at the worst possible time and you arrive here seeming like, you know, I'm just getting started, I've got the energy—we're going to do this.

You're the only person I know that comes before a committee like this with a positive attitude and leaves with a positive attitude and I want to commend you for that because the questions are inherently tough and mine will probably be no exception.

It was touched on earlier—even though UNRWA wasn't our direct authority and certainly wasn't yours Congress on a bipartisan basis now has essentially said we cannot trust the United Nations, specifically UNRWA, in Gaza.

That means that by definition many of the same people who worked for UNRWA will need to be rehired by some successor organization. Others will need to be recruited.

With your vast experience both at the U.N. and now at USAID how would we go about ensuring that we vet people in a very different way, we vet programs in a different way, and at some time, God willing, in the near future we begin rebuilding Gaza for the Palestinians and 1.2 plus million who will hopefully be returning to what will become homes again?

That's probably the largest job, perhaps, since World War II to look at an area so dense and have to rebuild.

One, is your organization up to being a partner in that and if not who?

Ms. POWER. I mean, this is a very challenging question. Let me just say in the here and now there is no substitute for the humanitarian backbone that they provide. Just the sheer numbers of individual, the experience they have, their knowledge of communities—again, where the trucks come from, who knows the routes and just—and I'll get to your question.

But one little parenthetical is Israel, about a month ago in light of the allegations—the horrific allegations—made a decision that UNRWA could not participate in convoys to the north—humanitarian convoys.

But what that meant was, fundamentally, there could be no convoys to the north because you can't—as bombs are falling and kinetic operations are underway and terrorists are being pursued you can't, you know, suddenly invent an entire humanitarian infrastructure, which I know is not what you're suggesting. Yes.

Mr. ISSA. No. Ambassador, just to narrow it for sake of time—

Ms. POWER. Yes. Okay.

Mr. ISSA [continuing]. After World War II both in Europe and in Japan we recognize that you come as you are and use what is available. That includes the people who know these routes, the people who were teachers, the people who provided humanitarian aid.

I don't have any illusion that suddenly we're going to find thousands of replacement people. My question really was how do we vet? How do we participate in a vetting that can cause the people of Israel, the people of the United States as taxpayers, and Congress and yourself to have comfort that what happened, what has been discovered under the grounds of Gaza, won't happen again?

I have no illusions. Many of those people may not love Israel but they would—they do care about their people or foreigners who cared about people.

So I'm not saying that—and maybe others here on the dais would say it. I'm not saying that you're disqualified if you work for UNRWA. I'm saying that at the top there has to be new confidence.

You're too young but I'm not to remember when the Red Cross had no confidence and we brought in Elizabeth Dole. She didn't fire everybody but she did begin rebuilding confidence in that great organization.

How do we rebuild the confidence to take care of the worst humanitarian disaster in modern times?

Ms. POWER. Well, despite whatever energy I might have, positive energy, I hope, fundamentally this is not something that I have dug into personally. But the second—

Mr. ISSA. You're just one phone call away from the president giving you this job. You know that.

Ms. POWER. But the second investigation underway—there's one into the named individuals that the Israelis brought forward who are alleged to have been complicit in or actively participated in October 7th.

The other investigation is on this question, on the policies and the procedures and the vetting, and that's for UNRWA itself.

But I would presume that whatever lessons are gleaned about UNRWA would be the ones that would be applied as well to other

organizations who, of course, the organizational leadership are all worried, you know, that, you know, allegations like that could be brought forward.

But their presence, again, in Gaza is so small that their ability to take—which I know, again, is not what you’re suggesting, but to take up what UNRWA has been doing in war time is not present.

I will say also—last point—is that other donors are going to make a huge difference here. We are following the law. The Biden administration—you know, we think it’s really important to confer—UNRWA to continue to do its vital work, particularly in places like Jordan, elsewhere in the region, but also in Gaza, where the needs are so great but that we’re going to follow the law and that is not going to be possible for the U.S. to fund.

Other countries are stepping up and doing more to sustain UNRWA and, you know, I think we want to make sure that they are also using their leverage on behalf of UNRWA reform if UNRWA ends up, you know, being the organization of choice for the rest of the world, going forward.

Mr. ISSA. Thank you. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from Illinois, Mr. Schneider.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you for being here.

I want to thank you for the work you do. You know, broadly, I say the world is safer and U.S. interests are better served, advanced, and protected when America leads and we work with our allies and partners.

And I’ve often talked about in this room the three-legged stool of defense, diplomacy, and development and how the three need to work together, and USAID is certainly a critical component of that.

You know, the agency is unparalleled in its ability to help counter the root causes of extremism, uncontrolled migration, and international crime caused by poverty and hopelessness.

USAID cultivates freedom, democracy, stability—three crucial components of an effective American-led international order. And so, again, thank you for what you do. But for all these reasons it’s also why I’m disheartened by voices shying away from our responsibility to lead.

For example, Fiscal Year 1924 appropriations already included counterproductive cuts to USAID’s budget and I pray, I hope, that my Republican colleagues won’t do the same in 2025 and I just want to start with that.

Let me shift, though, and talk about Gaza. We have already talked quite a bit about it. You know, three key things that I see we need to immediately surge massive quantities of humanitarian aid, in particular, food into Gaza.

We know that, but we need to be able to sustain those quantities of aid over time and, ultimately, we need to break with recent history and work to create a new vision for Gaza, a new, better future for both Palestinians, Israelis and everyone around the region.

So I’ve got a number of questions but I’ll start with from the beginning of this war Hamas started October 7th I’ve been doing all I can to convince Egypt and Israel to open border crossings for aid, first Rajah and then Kerem Shalom and now Erez.

Can you talk about how aid is getting across the border and how it is or is not being distributed once it's across the border through-out Gaza?

Ms. POWER. Well, in brief, of course, inspections in Nitzana and in Kerem Shalom I also visited last month to see the process in Kerem Shalom and, you know, it is really important that just in the last week you've seen the number of hours that the inspections are able to occur expanded. This is something President Biden has been pushing for, you know, almost the full 6 months of the war.

So those—you know, again, expanding the throughput of inspections is how we have been able to get up now to, I think, 420 trucks yesterday, which is double where we were a week ago. So that's one answer.

Also, moving supplies from Jordan. In El Arish as you probably saw—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. How about once it's in Gaza how—

Ms. POWER. Oh, sorry. To the distribution in Gaza, I think their, you know, scarcity of flow in created a much more challenging situation on the other side because the prices went up, the gangs were incentivized, the civilians grew desperate, and movement became very challenging.

We are hopeful and the government of Israel uses this expression now too, that flooding the zone with food will render, you know, access more secure and more stable but Israel has to be a part of that, too. The number of convoys turned back at checkpoints or have to wait for hours, which is itself a security hazard for those driving those convoys, that has to change.

And so that's part of the deconfliction and coordination process we're a part of.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Great. Thank you. Do you have a sense of how much of the aid that's actually gotten into Gaza across the border has either been stolen by Hamas and taken down into the tunnels or commandeered by the gangs and put on the black market where civilians are having to pay for that aid?

Ms. POWER. I mean, what I can say is that our partners in order to receive USAID funding are all obliged to report diversion and we are not seeing Hamas dictating where food is provided.

I can assure you that if the government of Israel saw Hamas doing that, just as they brought forward the UNRWA allegations, we would be hearing about it.

So, you know, it's not a perfect distribution network and, as I mentioned, the famine like conditions in the north and the near famine like conditions in much of the South create a level of desperation that has led to what is referred to as self distribution.

But what that appears to have done is now pave the way for—at least this is the hope—is that that will pave the way for much more of the traditional humanitarian distributions that we see in other war settings. It was having so little food getting in for so long it created an almost Hobbesian dynamic that went well beyond Hamas which, again, we have not seen that systematic diversion or even the reports that our partners are required to provide if—

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Thank you. And I'm out of time. I'll leave the last question maybe for the record. But what can Congress do? What are the most important things we can do to make sure that

that aid gets into Gaza that needed—the needs of the Gazan people are addressed?

Ms. POWER. Can I answer quickly? Pass the supplemental and press our Israeli partners to actually follow through on the commitments that they've made in recent days but follow through with haste, recognizing that it's a famine that we're talking about. This is not something that can wait.

Mr. SCHNEIDER. Happy to do it. Happy to do it.

With that, I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from Florida, Mr. Mast.

Mr. MAST. Thank you, Mr. Self. How are you doing today? Good.

So I've heard a lot of different back and forth both from your opening statement and response to questions. Did the Biden administration cutoff aid to Gaza or not?

Ms. POWER. Did the Biden administration cutoff aid to Gaza?

Mr. MAST. U.S. aid to Gaza.

Ms. POWER. No.

Mr. MAST. No? Did the Biden administration cutoff U.S. support to UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. We suspended support to UNRWA when the allegations came forward so put a pause on it, yes.

Mr. MAST. Is that support still suspended?

Ms. POWER. Again, I don't administer UNRWA support. But yes, we're now under—we have the provisions of the Fiscal Year 1924 bill, which I think prohibits UNRWA funding. Again, this is run out of—the UNRWA funding questions, I think, should be referred to the State Department.

Mr. MAST. So we did not suspend aid to Gaza. We did suspend support to UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. Correct, when the allegations came forward.

Mr. MAST. And it's still suspended today?

Ms. POWER. To my knowledge, yes.

Mr. MAST. Okay. And why was it important that we suspended aid to UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. Because these were very serious allegations that we and many of our democratic friends believe the U.N. had to launch a credible and independent investigation into and those investigations, again, two of them—one outside the U.N. system, one within it within the Office of Investigations or whatever—are currently underway.

Mr. MAST. And what do you know about the outcomes of those allegations?

Ms. POWER. I don't know about the outcomes of the investigations.

Mr. MAST. Do you think it's important that we suspend aid to UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. I think it's important that the perpetrators of crimes be held accountable. I think it's important that people who would participate in a terrorist attack and who want to eliminate the Jewish people and the State of Israel not work for a humanitarian agency.

I think it's also important that there not be famine in Gaza and the innocent civilians not pay the price for the crimes of a few.

Mr. MAST. So you don't think that we should be suspending aid to Gaza?

Ms. POWER. I think we should be supporting a humanitarian operation that has as its backbone UNRWA.

Mr. MAST. Do you think we should be giving U.S. aid to Gaza?

Ms. POWER. We are giving U.S. aid to Gaza and I think we should, yes.

Mr. MAST. And you think that we should do that?

Ms. POWER. Yes. I think it's not in our—consistent with our values or interests to see people starve in Gaza.

Mr. MAST. But you think—

Ms. POWER. And so I think we should be part of the solution and not the problem, yes.

Mr. MAST. Plainly. You know, again, you just—to repeat it, to not be convoluted here, you think that we should give U.S. dollars, U.S. aid, U.S. support to Gaza?

Ms. POWER. To the people of Gaza. USAID gives support to World Food Programme, to UNICEF, to International Medical Corps, to our trusted partners that we work with all over the world.

Those are the individuals and the organizations to whom we are giving resources and we are doing so because we believe that they should, yes, be providing, for example, ready-to-use therapeutic food to kids under five whose arms are about this big at this point because of lack of access to food and nutrition.

Yes, I think we should support trying to undo a situation where kids are dying when there's food on the shelves in supermarkets just a few kilometers away.

Mr. MAST. Are Palestinians our ally?

Ms. POWER. We have an interest and we have a long history of working with the Palestinian people and we should continue to do so.

Mr. MAST. Is Israel our ally?

Ms. POWER. Yes.

Mr. MAST. Are Palestinians our ally?

Ms. POWER. The Palestinians are our partners and our friends. As you know, ally is a term of art that is used—

Mr. MAST. Palestinians are our friends?

Ms. POWER. Many Palestinians are our friends, absolutely.

Mr. MAST. Their government is our friend?

Ms. POWER. We work with the people of—we work with communities. We work with people who are holding the Palestinian Authority to account—independent journalists, civil society organizations, who are documenting many of the things that I'm sure you are rightly publicizing.

So checks and balances are incredibly important but if we think we can see a secure and democratic and thriving Israel without looking out as well for the welfare of the Palestinians and ensuring that they can live in dignity and security side by side I think that's very short sighted.

Mr. MAST. Do you think Egypt should be taking in Palestinians?

Ms. POWER. I mean, it's—I think that—what is the context in which you're asking that question? You mean—

Mr. MAST. Quite obviously, in front of you the ongoing war. Do you think Egypt should be taking in Palestinians?

Ms. POWER. Egypt is taking in medical evacuations of Palestinians from Gaza and we're working with our partners on the ground.

Mr. MAST. Do you think they should open the door and let anybody come in that wants to?

Ms. POWER. You know, I think fundamentally what you have among Palestinians is a desire to live in their homes, homes they've lived in for generations.

Mr. MAST. Not an answer. Do you think Egypt should open the gates and say come on in?

Ms. POWER. I think that it is important that Palestinians who live in Gaza can remain in Gaza, which is where they want to remain.

Mr. MAST. My time is expired.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from Texas, Mr. Castro.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you.

Administrator Power, thank you for joining us today.

Of course, I'd normally ask you about locally led development and some of your great work there at USAID but I want to ask you, obviously, about the very urgent situation—humanitarian situation—in Gaza.

In your testimony you said that the entire population of Gaza is living under the threat of famine. News reports came out recently that certain USAID officials sent a cable to the National Security Council warning that famine is already likely occurring in parts of the Gaza Strip.

According to the report, quote, "famine conditions are most severe and widespread in northern Gaza, which is under Israeli control." Do you think that it's plausible or likely that parts of Gaza and particularly northern Gaza are already experiencing famine?

Ms. POWER. Well, the methodology that the IPC used is one that we had our experts scrub. It's one that's relied upon in other settings and that is their assessments, and we believe that assessment is credible.

Mr. CASTRO. So there's—a famine is already occurring there?

Ms. POWER. That is—yes.

Mr. CASTRO. Yes. Okay. More than half of the population of Gaza is under the age of 18, as you know, and are seriously affected by the lack of access to food and nutrition, and various organizations including the United Nations have warned that hundreds of thousands of Palestinian children may die if they don't get necessary food and nutrition assistance in just the next two to 3 weeks.

Has USAID made such an assessment itself and do you have a sense of how many such children might be at risk of dying if they don't get access to food and nutrition that's currently unavailable?

Ms. POWER. I do not have those assessments on hand but I will say that the—in northern Gaza the rate of malnutrition prior to October 7th was almost zero and it is now one in three—one in three kids.

But extrapolating out is hard, and I will say just with some humility, because it is so hard to move around in Gaza, because the access challenges that give rise in part to the malnutrition are so

severe, it is also, you know, hard to do the kind of scaled assessments that we would wish to do.

But in terms of, you know, actual severe acute malnutrition for under fives that rate was 16 percent in January and became 30 percent in February, and we're awaiting the March numbers but we expect it to continue on——

Mr. CASTRO. So it got markedly worse?

Ms. POWER. Yes, markedly worse. But extrapolating and giving you the overall numbers I——

Mr. CASTRO. And just to be clear, I realize you're not part of the DOD or, you know, the State Department working on these issues diplomatically. But is it your understanding that humanitarian assistance and food assistance is not supposed to be denied even when countries are at war with each other?

Because there is this argument that, well, if Hamas would release the hostages, if they would surrender, that this would stop. But there's certain laws of war and certain conduct that nations are supposed to follow and that includes allowing for humanitarian assistance?

Ms. POWER. Correct. I mean, I will say, of course, and we all agree the hostages should be released.

Mr. CASTRO. Absolutely.

Ms. POWER. It's an absolute outrage that they have been kept this long and the horror and terror for the families of those individuals. I can't even contemplate.

But yes, food must flow and not——

Mr. CASTRO. But kids can't be starved because you have two groups that are at war with each other?

Ms. POWER. Food must flow and food has not flowed in sufficient quantities to avoid this imminent famine in the south and these conditions that are giving rise already to child deaths in the north.

Mr. CASTRO. And I'm down to 1 minute so part of this maybe we'll ask for the record. But in response to questions from my colleague Representative Wild of Pennsylvania you said that there have been restrictions on U.S. humanitarian assistance.

You also referenced the National Security Memorandum 20 as taking into account future restrictions and you said that that was a process that Secretary Blinken was leading.

Given the USAID's expertise on these issues was USAID and in particular the Bureau of Humanitarian Assistance provided an opportunity to weigh in to the State Department's determination under NSM 20 that Israel's assurances that it's following U.S. and international law are, quote, "credible and reliable?"

Ms. POWER. Absolutely.

Mr. CASTRO. Thank you. Thank you for your work, and I yield back.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from Georgia, Mr. McCormick.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Thank you, Mr. Chair.

War is a horrible thing and dealing with humanitarian aid during the fog of war and the stresses that go with that I just—I admire your efforts in that regard. I know that's a difficult thing, especially in a politically charged environment to add to that.

With that said, some interesting things came up that I kind of want to clarify with some statements you've made in the past.

The Washington Post reported that in January of this year while you were giving a speech on climate change a former employee of USAID interrupted you regarding the current conflict of Israel—in Israel saying, “You wrote a book on genocide. You were still working for the administration. You should resign and speak out,” end quote.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to insert this Washington Post article entitled “USAID’s Samantha Power, genocide scholars confronted by staff on Gaza” to the record, please.

Mr. SELF. Without objection.

[The information referred to appears in the Appendix:]

Mr. MCCORMICK. Thank you.

According to the same article you thanked her for her comments and stated that more than 25,000 civilians have been killed in the conflict. That number came from the Gaza Ministry of Health, which Hamas controls.

Did you agree with the heckler’s premise that the—Israel’s fight against Hamas constitutes genocide, yes or no?

Ms. POWER. I think every country has a right to defend itself and Israel certainly has a right to defend itself. Hamas still seeks to eliminate Israelis. I’ve just visited kibbutz Be’eri where a hundred people—more than a hundred people were killed on October 7th.

So I think that right to pursue Hamas is clear. I also think pursuing Hamas in a manner that looks out for civilians, where they provide humanitarian access in sufficient amounts, is imperative as well.

Mr. MCCORMICK. So do you believe—I’m going to reState the question just to make sure I understand—do you believe the way that Israel is fighting against Hamas does that constitute genocide, yes or no?

Ms. POWER. Again, I’m not going to answer yes or no questions like that. I’m going to do my job, which is focusing on getting humanitarian assistance to people who need it.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Okay. Fair enough. Obviously, the person who confronted you is not the only USAID employee who thinks this way.

In November hundreds of your employees signed a letter calling for a cease-fire, and I was in Afghanistan—I realize the USMC, which governs military action, is a little bit different than everybody else.

But, for example, I couldn’t do—as a military noncombatant, an ER physician in Afghanistan, it would probably be inappropriate for me to write a letter to the President saying I think we should have a cease-fire in Afghanistan, to say the least.

Do you think it’s appropriate for USAID workers to do the same kind of thing where they basically sign letters stating an opinion rather than doing their job, basically saying—taking a political stance?

Ms. POWER. I mean, I have no evidence that they’re not doing their jobs. As you noted we have evidence that 75—

Mr. MCCORMICK. So it is appropriate?

Ms. POWER. Whether it's—we have a Dissent channel. We have a direct channel for a reason. I benefit from hearing from staff. I get criticized all the time.

Sometimes I think the criticisms are valid and sometimes I learn something about how what I'm doing is perceived or how what the Biden administration is doing is perceived.

And I would note that, again, we have had internal traffic maybe not of that magnitude but also on Afghanistan.

Mr. MCCORMICK. Okay. I got to move quickly because I only have a minute and a half left. So I appreciate your candor on that.

There was an article last month titled "Top Biden advisor reveals she confronted Netanyahu," and then quoted you at their health care summit, where you said that you asked Prime Minister Netanyahu to improve compliance with international humanitarian law.

Mr. Chairman, I ask unanimous consent to insert this Washington Post article titled, "Top Biden advisor reveals she confronted Netanyahu" into the record.

Mr. SELF. Without objection.

[The information referred to appears in the Appendix:]

Mr. MCCORMICK. Okay. Could you please give us specific instances of violations of international humanitarian law on Israel's part?

Ms. POWER. First of all, I did not say that I confronted but I had on my trip really important extensive discussions about the need to improve deconfliction—

Mr. MCCORMICK. Do you have any violation of international humanitarian law by Israel?

Ms. POWER. Can I just—again, just finish the one quick point which is—

Mr. MCCORMICK. Very quick. I got 32—38 seconds.

Ms. POWER. I understand, but you've asked a question.

Civilians and humanitarians are dying in very, very large numbers including most recently the World Central Kitchen strike.

Mr. MCCORMICK. So is Israel violating international law?

Ms. POWER. To improve the ability to keep civilians safe and to allow humanitarians to do their job as the World Central Kitchen strike—

Mr. MCCORMICK. Okay. So I'm going to go ahead and—I got to finish up because I'm running out of time here real quickly.

The White House National Security Communication Adviser John Kirby said that the State Department had not found any incidences where Israel has violated international humanitarian law.

Who's wrong and who's right here? I just—there's conflicting articles based on two officials of the Biden administration who seem to think that either Israel is conducting an unjust war or they're not in violation.

I'm just kind of confused and I think maybe if we're going to make political statements, whether it be by your employees or yourself, it starts to compound the problem of getting your job done.

And I think your job is very important. Don't get me wrong. I think what you're doing is incredibly important and we need to take care of innocent noncombatants that are being starved, if you will, or not getting the service they need to.

But I just want to make sure we have a unified process going forward rather than contradictory statements by political people that don't seem to have their act together when it comes to a unifying response.

Thank you. With that, I have to yield.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentlelady from North Carolina, Ms. Manning.

Ms. MANNING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman, and thank you, Administrator Power, for all your service to this country over many, many years. I'm over here.

Thank you for all your service for many, many years and your patience during this hearing. There is no question we need to make sure that there is more humanitarian aid getting into the innocent Palestinians in Gaza.

I have a very dear friend in my district whose husband's family is in Gaza and I get regular reports about how they are suffering and how they would do anything to get rid of Hamas because they believe that it would relieve their suffering.

So I'd like to know from you does Hamas make it more difficult to deliver humanitarian assistance to those who need help in Gaza?

Ms. POWER. All I can tell you because I'm not there is the reports from our partners is that right now is not the impediment. That is not the barrier to getting food to people.

I, like you, would expect it would be given what Hamas does otherwise, targeting innocent civilians, using innocent civilians as human shields.

But, again, trusted partners like World Food Programme, UNICEF, and others have not reported that Hamas is getting in the way of distributing humanitarian assistance and I will say nor are we getting those reports from the IDF who are present on the ground in Gaza.

Ms. MANNING. I have been getting reports, in fact, that Hamas is targeting, punishing, or hindering Palestinians who are working with the international community to provide humanitarian assistance.

You have not seen any evidence of that?

Ms. POWER. I would be very interested in those reports but that is not what our partners are reporting back to us.

Ms. MANNING. So do you believe that Hamas is benefiting from the aid that we are providing to Gaza?

Ms. POWER. I mean, it's—I don't even know how to think about that question in this moment when Hamas is on the run and being pursued across Gaza.

So, you know, I don't think they are in a position because of what the IDF is doing to benefit per se. Would family members of Hamas potentially be getting access at a food distribution? You know, that's possible. It's going to civilians largely—

Ms. MANNING. Do you have any knowledge of how Hamas fighters are getting their food?

Ms. POWER. I don't.

Ms. MANNING. So it is a difficult balance to strike when we desperately want to make sure that innocent Palestinians don't suffer and don't starve but we don't want to do anything to embolden Hamas.

And I have spent today much of my time this morning meeting with hostage families and I met with a woman whose husband is from North Carolina, the State that I represent, and she was held hostage for 51 days and her situation was so appalling that she said during her captivity she wished that she had been killed, and now she's been waiting for her husband Keith for 186 days.

And one of the things that we are concerned about is how do we make sure that innocent Palestinians don't starve but how do we avoid emboldening Hamas so that they will not—so that they will release those 136 hostages including at least five Americans?

Ms. POWER. Well, all I can say is that Israel is aggressively pursuing Hamas and is seeking to dismantle Hamas and Hamas fighters are on the run.

But whatever that balance is to be struck it's hard to say that that balance with also the welfare of civilians has yet been achieved if you have famine in the north and potentially imminent famine in the south.

So you're absolutely right that it's weighing the costs and the benefits and this is just the exchange that I had, again, not long ago in Israel with COGAT, with the IDF, or with Israeli officials.

Nobody is saying that this is easy. But a lot of the decisions that the government of Israel made in the early phases of the war they later went on to reverse—in other words, the decision not to open Kerem Shalom, then they opened Kerem Shalom.

The decision not to allow fuel in because it was dual use. In the end, they recognized you can't do humanitarian delivery without doing fuel.

What we have been saying consistently is just do all of that sooner so that fewer people are harmed.

Ms. MANNING. And I appreciate the work you do. I truly do. But I know that there is a hostage deal on the table, a cease-fire deal on the table right now, and Hamas is the party that is refusing to accept the deal.

And I am deeply worried that there are things that we are doing that are preventing Hamas from taking the deal and releasing those hostages including American citizens, and it keeps me up at night.

So my time has expired. Thank you again for all your service and I yield back.

Mr. SELF. Thank you. I recognize myself for 5 minutes.

One of the advantages of being so far down the chain is much of the ground has been plowed. I want to focus on what I think is a dangerous part of this Israeli situation, Lebanon.

We know about UNRWA. That ground has been plowed. UNIFIL is the organization—the U.N. organization in Lebanon. There is an agreement that Hezbollah is not supposed to operate below the Litani River. There is a demilitarized zone there.

I believe that USAID supplies, like \$70 million—is that correct? To Lebanon? Is that on the order?

Ms. POWER. That sounds if it's combining—I don't know if you mean the bilateral programming or the humanitarian. It's more substantial if it includes the humanitarian. But go ahead.

Mr. SELF. Okay. Very good. But these are the dollars that are given to the government of Lebanon, which is heavily influenced by Hezbollah, as you know.

Have you considered the danger of Lebanon exploding? Because there have been displacements. You mentioned the Lebanese displacements. There have also been thousands—tens of thousands of Israeli displacements in the north as well. It's not just the Lebanese that are being displaced.

Have you considered the impact of those dollars that we are giving to the Lebanese government which—and can you—have you considered it? And, second, do you have any indication that Hezbollah is diverting those dollars as Hamas did for their wartime preparation?

Ms. POWER. Thank you. First, let me just stipulate that I didn't mention Israeli displaced not out of neglect or a lack of awareness but only because USAID doesn't work in advanced economies where a democracy like Israel looks out for its own displaced. So it's just we work in Lebanon, have a mission doing work to support the Lebanese people.

Look, I want to look at your—what you're looking at but we are certainly not giving \$70 million to the Lebanese government—USAID. Our work in health, in agriculture, in other domains, by and large, I mean, in most countries is not government to government assistance.

My team will correct me if somehow I missed that on my trip to Lebanon not long ago. So, again, our work is to make sure that the government is held accountable. Our work is to support independent media that hold them accountable, for example, after the port blast and the like.

Our work is to try to strengthen the economy and support SMEs or American University of Beirut so that people have scholarships so they don't turn to Hezbollah later. So, again, you may be referring to something specific that I'm not aware of and I apologize.

Mr. SELF. I'm just taking the administration reports of \$67 million.

Ms. POWER. I think when we say to Lebanon, though, it's to this range of other parties. I, again, would be very surprised if that was government to government support.

Mr. SELF. Okay. I would ask you to look at the UNIFIL. They are not doing their job because Israel has been striking areas south of—in the area of the Wadi Saluki and this is in the demilitarized zone.

We need to be using all of our soft power so that we don't have to use hard power later to make sure that Hezbollah—because this is—if Hamas is the B team Hezbollah is the A team in the area. They have thousands of rockets, more than Hamas. This could be very dangerous.

I want to move to Qatar. Qatar plays both sides of the fence. They play both sides of the fence in Afghanistan. They play both sides of the fence with Israel and Hamas.

Why in the world are we continuing to use Qatar in their playing both sides of the fence in both of the situations that they are intimately involved in?

Ms. POWER. Well, on both UNIFIL and Qatar your questions are probably better steered to Secretary Blinken, who I know is appearing here. I hope he'll forgive me for saying that.

But, you know, look, what I would just say is that anybody who has leverage when hostages are in peril we are going to seek to use that leverage, and the flip side of it is as you describe but we need Qatar and all countries that have an ounce of leverage over Hamas to use that leverage to insist that these innocent people be returned to their families.

And so, you know, I think I think that's something you would do if in a position to use that leverage and something we wish to do. We want to see Qatar as well doing more in terms of humanitarian assistance, doing more development work.

The United States benefits when more countries are willing to engage in development and help countries become more stable where it isn't and this is something, again, that I think there's bipartisan consensus. It's always in our interests to share the burden of the kind of work that we have been describing.

Mr. SELF. I'm not as sanguine as you are because listening to the organizations that are still getting interpreters out of Afghanistan, they are not at all sanguine about Qatar's leverage, to use your word. So I think we need to not only hold the governments that you're discussing accountable but Qatar as well.

And with that, I yield back and I recognize the gentleman from California, Mr. Costa.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you very much, Mr. Chairman, of this committee.

Madam Ambassador, your tireless and passionate service to our country is to be commended and thank you for extending your time this afternoon.

It's a hard job that you have. I want to quickly touch upon three areas in ways that I don't think other—because time is limited others have questioned about Armenia, about Ukraine, and about Gaza.

Armenia is something that you have a lot of experience. In the agreements this last week that took place with the EU initiative and our own commitments—I think it's an additional \$65 million, if I remember correctly—what role will USAID play in the region, moving forward, and this does this include, in your view, increasing humanitarian and development assistance for Armenia? And what can Congress do to help support you in that effort?

Ms. POWER. Well, Congressman, as we discussed recently Armenia is at an absolutely pivotal inflection point and—

Mr. COSTA. Are they associated with us and they want to be a Western country and they're in a tough neighborhood.

Ms. POWER. Very, very tough neighborhood.

And I did have the chance to meet with the prime minister on Friday along with European Commissioner von der Leyen and Secretary Blinken and it was a really historic event, actually, to see that embrace of Prime Minister Pashinyan and the reform efforts his government is making.

I think what you'll see is stepped up work across a range of sectors. Their economy is very dependent on their former Soviet partners including their food security.

So USAID is looking at investments in the agricultural sector so that they can produce more in the way of wheat, especially at home.

Mr. COSTA. We should talk about partnerships there in the—California, especially in the San Joaquin Valley, a lot of Armenian expats that have been very excellent in agriculture and there may be some synergy that we could develop.

Ms. POWER. Indeed, and I'd love to followup with you on that. That is something we are trying to do more systematically at USAID particularly with diaspora communities that are as dynamic as the Armenian community.

But, you know, they need support for the people of Nagorno-Karabakh. More than 100,000 people no longer have their homes. One of the things I talked to the prime minister about is housing—permanent housing for these people.

At the same time we press Azerbaijan to allow these people to have—

Mr. COSTA. Because of time, if you could provide me maybe a little descriptive with your staff. I would appreciate how we could work and followup on that.

On Ukraine—and we're all passionate and I just pray to God that we're going to get this package passed next week for the Ukrainian people—but besides the tanks and bullets the additional assistance necessary to help Ukraine economically and on a humanitarian standpoint, and you talked about how they've exceeded agricultural production in some instances and it was the breadbasket.

But what do you think in terms of the longer term efforts?

Ms. POWER. Let me just quote the head of the IMF, who described Ukraine's economic growth rate this past year, which I think was over 5 percent, as breathtaking. I mean, what—a lot of attention is rightly paid to—

Mr. COSTA. Given the fact they're in the middle of a war.

Ms. POWER [continuing]. To the bravery of the citizen. Now, you could say when 30 percent of your GDP gets, you know, taken out by an aggressor, you know, you can only go up.

But that's not even the case. I mean, they have to do the kind of energy repairs that they do on the fly when Putin targets their energy infrastructure. The farmers are planting fields from which they have to demine or sometimes wear protective equipment in order to go out and actually do the harvesting.

So the fact that Ukraine has reverted to its preinvasion agricultural numbers virtually is just extraordinary.

Mr. COSTA. I want to add that to your long term descriptive because I wanted to get to Gaza. I mean—

Ms. POWER. Well, I would just say in the—they are on a trajectory where if bombs weren't falling and you could unleash the tech capabilities—their tech sector grew by 5 percent the first year after the war, their young people—the education that they have, I mean, they are on a pathway to Europe, not only because they have the—

Mr. COSTA. All the more reason we need to pass this next—

Ms. POWER. It's absolutely indispensable.

And if I could just say there are three buckets, right. There's the direct budget support, which we have had a back and forth on with Congressman Kean which humanitarian assistance for the world of which Ukraine is a part.

But there's the development assistance, the support for agriculture, for energy, for anti-corruption. That is the investment in Ukraine's future and that is in the Senate package as well, and I worry it's not talked about even by the friends of Ukraine.

But that is USAID's bilateral resistance—

Mr. COSTA. I am glad you got a chance to reiterate that just now.

Ms. POWER. I tried to.

Mr. COSTA. One moment. This is a comment, Mr. Chairman, if you'll allow me the discretion.

Obviously, averting a famine in Gaza has to be our first priority. We can't in any other way think about that. We have got to prevent a famine from taking place there.

But in your descriptive, again, when reconstruction begins to take place and what that looks like when this war ends in Gaza what our role is and how we partner with our moderate Arab countries on reconstruction is something I'm very interested in.

Ms. POWER. Well, I think American companies are already engaging and will be incredibly important players. But that is why the investments in anti-corruption, in independent media, in open procurement—all of these investments now also put us in a position to see a more optimal form of reconstruction that occurred, say, in Afghanistan.

Mr. COSTA. Thank you for your service. Thank you for your time, Madam Ambassador.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from New York, Mr. Lawler.

Mr. LAWLER. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

Administrator, following January reports that 12 UNRWA employees were involved in the October 7th terrorist attack the administration halted new money toward UNRWA.

In the appropriations package Congress passed recently we added an additional year-long funding pause. There is no question here UNRWA must be defunded and disbanded. There are institutional problems at UNRWA that were present long before October.

In fact, there was an amendment to defund UNRWA in the State and Foreign Operations appropriations bill that was voted on in September of last year.

I voted yes on that amendment along with 212 of my colleagues. It wasn't enough for the amendment to pass but it demonstrates that there was already serious concern with the operations of UNRWA prior to the administration's decision to cut funding.

Further, this past November I led floor debate to pass the Peace and Tolerance in Palestinian Education Act, which discussed the anti-Jewish and anti-Israel curricula taught to children in Gaza and the West Bank, curricula taught by UNRWA employees.

So while, yes, we appreciate the prohibition on new funding in January this is long overdue as there were clear and present issues at UNRWA that looks like were ignored by the administration.

Did you have concerns about UNRWA prior to October 7th?

Ms. POWER. You know, we have been here for a few hours and I've been engaging all the UNRWA questions.

I just do want to make clear that USAID doesn't fund UNRWA. I don't have any oversight over UNRWA or any engagement with UNRWA, and probably detailed questions notwithstanding the fact that I've been trying to answer them are better extended elsewhere.

Part of the challenge here about the idea of disbanding is that while the, again, inexcusable if the allegations are proven true nature of—

Mr. LAWLER. Would you have reason to believe the allegations are untrue?

Ms. POWER. Yes. I'm not—the investigation is underway. I think we would not have suspended funding if we didn't deem the allegations credible.

Mr. LAWLER. Right.

Ms. POWER. But, you know, the rest of the world—

Mr. LAWLER. Administrator, with respect, in your prior role did you have concern about UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. I'm not going to—there's so much going on in the world now. My prior role ended on January 20th, 2017.

Mr. LAWLER. Right. And at any point did you have concerns?

Ms. POWER. I absolutely—I also had no funding control over UNRWA. In that role I would note—

Mr. LAWLER. I didn't ask about funding control. I asked about concern.

Ms. POWER. Here's the challenge, which is often—

Mr. LAWLER. Administrator, I asked you a specific question. Did you have concern?

Ms. POWER. Yes, I did engage. I did engage and I did, of course, the textbook concerns—members of the administration.

The challenge is, and it was not a Democratic administration that pushed for elections in Gaza but those elections did give rise to the election of Hamas. Hamas was the State before now, the Israeli war, to dismantle the State and the State in every nation has a lot of say over textbooks. And that was true for a U.N. agency that worked, as it were, at the pleasure of the State.

We may not like the fact that those elections that the United States pushed for produced the outcome of Hamas as the leadership. I certainly don't like that. You don't like it. Putting people who want to eliminate another people in power is not anything that anybody would have wished.

But the effect is that the governing institution had a fair amount of—had, you know, significant leverage over the U.N. agency that was carrying out education programming—

Mr. LAWLER. Right. It's a terrorist State that has had control over this agency, which is in part why we have pushed to defund it. Would you support future year appropriations defunding UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. I don't know if you've had a chance to talk to the King of Jordan, for example.

Mr. LAWLER. Yes, I have. I've had dinner with him in Jordan.

Ms. POWER. And about what it is going to mean for the Jordanian people to have 2 million young people not, you know, basically looking for where their schools are going to get support for.

Now, it may be that the Europeans and others come in and address this issue and it doesn't fall to him——

Mr. LAWLER. Well, defunding UNRWA does not mean that we don't deal with humanitarian issues. It doesn't mean that we don't deal with education.

Ms. POWER. No, no, but it just is the school system.

Mr. LAWLER. Right. Doesn't mean that we don't deal with it——

Ms. POWER. It is the school system for 2.5 Palestinian people of Palestinian——

Mr. LAWLER. It means we find a different vehicle by which to do this. But UNRWA itself has proven to be corrupt.

Ms. POWER. But there—but as—you've been here for much of the exchange.

Mr. LAWLER. And it's proven to be corrupt.

Ms. POWER. There's no NGO—there's no U.N. agency that creates school systems. That's not—you don't—there's no like, U-Haul where there's a school system that you just deploy in Jordan to educate 2.6 million Jordanian kids. It doesn't—it just doesn't work that way.

So what I'm saying is that that be taken into——

Mr. LAWLER. Yes. Respectfully being, you know, snide about it not actually solving the issue here. The reality is UNRWA is not the vehicle by which we should be sending American taxpayer dollars at this point. It's just not.

Ms. POWER. And we will follow the law.

Mr. LAWLER. And we should—right? My question to you was do you support moving forward suspending it?

Ms. POWER. I'm describing the benefits of educating young people across the region and providing health services and I'm not seeing a viable alternative. So I would suggest——

Mr. LAWLER. So you believe we should continue to fund UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. I think, first of all, we don't know what Gaza is going to look like after this war ends. Hopefully, Hamas will be dismantled and new institutions will be in place whereby they will take care of educating their own young people and you won't need a U.N. agency to do it.

But it is extremely important that we look out for young people in Gaza. It is going to do nobody any favors for them not to have access to an education.

Mr. LAWLER. No. In fact, the fact is on October 7 part of the reason that you had that type of terrorist attack is because of the level of hatred and anti-Semitism that is taught in schools in Gaza.

That is part of the problem here, and UNRWA helped in terms of allowing for that to occur under the guise of a U.N. agency. It is disgusting. It is shameful, and the fact that we as the United States have helped support that organization, helped fund it, is an embarrassment and that's why we fought to defund it.

Mr. SELF. The gentleman's time has expired.

I recognize the gentleman from Massachusetts, Mr. Keating.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you, Mr. Chairman. I'd like to draw our attention to European issues and particularly Ukraine, Central Europe, and Georgia.

There's been a lot of comment and critique of the administration today, you know, on issues, the Ukraine in particular, and I must say that the most important issue at this moment, a pivotal moment in this war, is the supplemental aid to Ukraine—the bipartisan Senate package that's been sitting there.

Without that Ukraine could lose this war and we'd be fighting a new front under Article 5 with American troops on the ground, and the name—there's one person holding this up and he's not the administration.

His name is Speaker Johnson. One person is holding this up, holding it up from, I think, support maybe upwards of 300 Members of Congress to support this.

So when we're talking about critiques and trying to be critical let's start with the obvious. We're sitting here today at this moment in history and one person is holding it up. Not a very democratic action when 300 members, I believe, of Congress want to vote for that.

With Ukraine I'd like to—I'll give you—I'll go through all three, Administrator, and see—to give you enough time. But it's important to know some of the funding that's there from the United States and how important some of our loans are and how it affected financial standing of Ukraine, the ability to do the kind of things you talked about economically and survive, you know, financial standing with the IMF and the World Bank without those loans and how important that is.

Second, with Central Europe I want to just commend you on the work for the very small amount of money that's there. This is a hybrid war with Russia. They are trying to not just have a war of aggression in Ukraine; they're trying to deal with the conflict all through Europe using disinformation and other activities.

And I just want to say that the work that's being done, the pro-democracy work that's being done there to counter this is so critical, dealing with backsliding countries, particularly when we have countries like Hungary, you know, with some of their actions—Slovakia, with the support of some of their—lack of support there toward Ukraine and the rest of Europe in that regard.

And let me, finally, deal with Georgia, where the Georgian Dream Leaders have announced legislation which mirrors Russia's restrictive and repressive foreign agent law and announced legislation that would crack down on freedom of expression similar to the Russian foreign agent law that's crippling journalism and a free press.

And also in Georgia how we continue to work in Georgia to support Georgia's European Union accession progress. Yet, this concern, again, with legislation that's being proposed that we crack down on freedom of expression with regards to the LGBTQ+ individuals in Georgia.

And I gave you a lot to go through but these are very important issues so, if you could, take the rest of the time to address those issues.

Ms. POWER. Thank you.

Well, thank you for mentioning all of them. You know, on Ukraine I've said this before in the context of humanitarian assistance but I really want to stress that the word supplemental is a misnomer because we moved our base assistance to Ukraine into supplementals, rightly or wrongly—you all make the rules up here and write the bills—it was incredibly generous infusion of support deserved, of course, by these incredibly courageous and resilient people and we have put that money to unbelievably effective use.

And, again, you know, to talk about the rate at which their economy is growing, to talk about the change—believe it or not, the changed business operating environment, that the anti-corruption indicators, you know—go ahead.

Mr. KEATING. I just wanted to give you a chance on the other topics.

But humanitarian aid is like a misnomer. I mean, we're talking about funding——

Ms. POWER. Well, they are two different buckets.

Mr. KEATING [continuing]. First responders. We're talking about dealing with preserving the energy grid. The country would collapse and Putin would win if we aren't doing those things. So it's beyond humanitarian. But if I could on central Europe and Georgia——

Ms. POWER. Completely. Completely. No, but, I mean, we do humanitarian assistance, right. That is about giving vouchers to displaced people who wouldn't otherwise have access to food or, you know, free medical care or psychosocial support.

But these investments in the economy are what are going to put Ukraine in a position—I use the example of the Republic of Korea at the beginning of my opening statement of going from being a recipient of assistance to now \$5 billion a year as a development partner.

That's what Ukraine is going to be. They've already set up the shell of their new develop—their new USAID, Ukraine aid, that is going to be our partner working in other countries exporting technology.

I just want to mention one of the central European countries, Moldova, which also is on a brave democratic path that has brought it nothing but risk and a lot of misinformation interference from Russia.

But they are working to render their economy—to turn their economy to the West to fight corruption, to enhance tech and other skills in their young people so more people stay in Moldova. That's a success story.

And on Georgia just a very sad turn of events in terms of some of these anti-democratic moves, particularly sad in light of the strides that Georgia has made combating corruption because a lot of those who will be most chilled if this foreign agents law passes are those that hold the government accountable and that had been absolutely vital in rooting out corruption over many decades.

Georgia had been a real exemplar in terms of enhancing transparency, open procurement, and the like. So I think in all of these areas, again, there's more work to be done. But it comes back to we want to be catalytic with any resources we are given.

I want to turn one dollar into two dollars, three dollars, four dollars, including by crowding in the private sector working with the DFC and others.

But we do need these foundational resources and our Ukraine bilateral assistance that supports energy, agriculture, the economy, the tech sector, and the anti-corruption efforts live within the development assistance bucket that is in the supplemental. So without that supplemental that work will not be able to continue as it has.

Mr. KEATING. Thank you. I yield.

Mr. SELF. The gentleman's time has expired. I recognize the gentlelady from Pennsylvania, Ms. Dean.

Ms. DEAN. Thank you, Mr. Chairman.

And, Administrator Power, I am mindful of your time. We are well beyond your hard stop. Do you have time for five more minutes?

Ms. POWER. For you, of course. You've waited all this time.

Ms. DEAN. No. No. And I could do it privately with you, if you wish.

Ms. POWER. No, of course. Thank you. Please.

Ms. DEAN. You've been incredibly patient. Thank you for your work, for the work of your whole team around the world and, of course, a lot of our focus today is in Gaza, is in the plight between Israel and Hamas war and what is going on in Gaza.

We have an expression here I associate myself with, the good gentleman's remarks. I want to be really clear. I do not associate myself with some of the remarks that I've heard this afternoon regarding UNRWA.

To me, it shows a real misunderstanding of the work that they do. I was there in February. I was there also in November so twice since this war began. We met with UNRWA officials.

At that time in February they had lost 147 members of their team killed in this conflict. The number is now over 200, as I understand it, and so that horror was brought so vividly to life following Israel's killing of seven World Central Kitchen workers in those three vehicles. Horrifying, absolutely horrifying.

But to call for the defunding of UNRWA, they are angels on the ground. I am hypercritical of the alleged 12 or 15 who may have been infiltrating as Hamas, who may have participated in the October 7th horrendous barbaric attack.

But you don't throw everybody and all the good work out because I want to ask you if we continue this pause, if the world said we will not help you, UNRWA, your, however, thousands of workers who are on the ground who keep coming to work even when their families—whole families are killed what will happen with famine in Gaza if we just shut it down—no more UNRWA.

By the way, they're not educating. We know that. They can't even do that now. They have incredibly important vaccines and medical aid to be a part of but the essentialness of food and water what happens if we continue this disinformation campaign of defund UNRWA?

Ms. POWER. Well, first, thank you for bringing some facts into the conversation that I probably should have raised before including just the horrific loss of life for those who work for UNRWA and,

in general, you know, more than 220 aid workers killed by IDF or in IDF military operations to this point including most recently, of course, the World Central Kitchen colleagues, devastatingly.

And thank you also for reminding us all but UNRWA is an organization in Gaza alone of 13,000 people and the vast majority of those people have, you know, not been propagating hate but have been actually trying to educate young people.

The literacy rate in Gaza, I think, is something like 99 percent.

Ms. DEAN. Astounding.

Ms. POWER. It's one of the most—I should say, Gaza/West Bank—it's one of the most effective literacy efforts, you know, in any of the places that USAID works.

In terms of what would happen if the whole thing shut down, right now it looks like other countries are stepping up to avert that scenario. But, you know, I just cannot overstate how chaotic and how horrific the conditions in Gaza are. You've spoken to them. The visuals speak to the level of destruction. There's no workaround for the infrastructure that they provide now.

You know, after the war when there's a new administration of Gaza if that comes about, obviously, that's itself extremely complicated. You know, the question of who is providing education as they try to rebuild virtually everything from scratch in the education and the health sector, you know, some of these questions will be addressed.

But right now there is no way to avert large-scale famine without relying on the humanitarian backbone that has been UNRWA for decades and that remains UNRWA today.

That doesn't mean, again, that—I mean, we are going to follow the law. We are going to work through other partners. But even as—I started to say this earlier—even the government of Israel, which had banned UNRWA participation in convoys because of the food crisis and U.S. engagement, I hope, has now decided that UNRWA can, in fact, be part of convoys going to the north because they recognize there's just no other way.

Ms. DEAN. Right. And I want to commend to anybody to please meet with the director of UNRWA who is stationed in Rafah, a 20-plus year U.S. military veteran. I don't know how people stay at this kind of work with the risks that they are taking but they are there.

He was very clear about that, which is their challenge is on the ground and I want to go back to where you began, which is it is incumbent upon us—it is malpractice that we have not passed the national security supplemental, urgent on it for Ukraine, of course, of course, for your continued work with USAID but humanitarian aid both for Israel and for Palestine, for Gazans, for the West Bank. I thank you for your work.

Ms. POWER. Thank you.

Mr. SELF. I recognize the gentleman from Arkansas, Mr. Hill.

Mr. HILL. Hello, Ambassador. Welcome. We're glad to have you back before us today. Thanks for all the time you're devoting to the mission around the world and spending time here with the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

I want to thank you really for your magnificent leadership and the time you've been in office. As it relates to helping Ukraine you

and I have talked about this extensively and I want to talk to you about the good work of this committee on the REPO Act, which Mike McCaul introduced and I worked with him to amend rather significantly.

But we got a very strong vote here—I think 40 to 2—and over in the Senate in the Senate Foreign Relations Committee something similar, 20 to 2, something of that nature. Do you support Russian assets that are currently frozen being seized and put in a U.N. or international fund for the benefit of Ukraine current budget needs or reconstruction?

Ms. POWER. Absolutely welcome the chairman's leadership, your leadership, that of Senator Whitehouse, Senator Risch, and others. I mean, this is extremely important.

It would be important anyway as a signal to Russia that you have to pay for what you did—that there is not the kind of impunity that Putin has become used to or seems to have become used to.

But it's also important because we need all the resources that we can get. The Ukrainians need all the resources that they can get to rebuild. We know that they use their resources extremely effectively.

We know that in using those resources they are making sacrifices and taking strides on behalf of freedom for all of the rest of us and I think this is an incredibly important tool.

Of course, we're trying to coordinate with the G-7 to make sure that we are acting collectively given where the vast majority of those assets are stored.

Mr. HILL. Right, and I've seen Foreign Secretary Cameron and Prime Minister Sunak have certainly been supportive. The Council on Europe will vote on April 16th to do this. So I think we really need to be a leader. I think the United States needs to lead and that will help Europe make the best decisions.

It's true we only have \$5 billion to \$6 billion of those Russian Federation sovereign assets here and it's certainly closer to almost \$300 billion in Europe. But I think our leadership here is important. Thank you for that.

I know that you've led in humanitarian efforts in Ukraine and one of those is in agriculture and restarting agriculture. I haven't heard much discussion about that today.

Thanks to American lethal aid and that from France and from Great Britain—I won't leave anybody out, I'll say allied nations—the Black Sea is now open for business. Is that right?

Ms. POWER. Yes, it is and—

Mr. HILL. And that means we contribute less resources to the government in Kyiv if in fact Ukraine is exporting foodstuffs, fertilizer, others?

Ms. POWER. Yes. I mean, Putin's stepped up bombardment isn't helping their ledger, right, so they've increased exports almost—I mean, have had even months where the agricultural exports exceed their preinvasion levels, which is just breathtaking, and is attributed to them and is a testament to the good that our support, I think, is doing.

At the same time, you know, the attacks on the energy infrastructure are of a ferocity and intensity that—we thought you

couldn't set new lows for brutality but each week Putin seems to be setting them. So——

Mr. HILL. Well, I think that's certain. He's trying to rival his predecessor Stalin in how many people he can kill around the world in Russia, in Ukraine, in Syria, in other places through his proxy support.

Let me turn to that other country if I could, which is Syria. USAID is supportive of aid in northwest Syria. Is that correct?

Ms. POWER. Depends on the form of aid but yes.

Mr. HILL. The HART Organization that runs much of the aid in northwest Syria out of Turkey and Iraq receives USAID support?

Ms. POWER. I think so. The details I am not familiar with.

Mr. HILL. Since the earthquake has it been hard to get aid into northwest Syria?

Ms. POWER. Yes, as you know from your travels, but I think the teams are doing their best to find workarounds.

Mr. HILL. I just—that stabilization funding there that's something that the U.S. has supported. The Bahar Organization is just one organization that's doing it. Is that—that's still a priority for us to work with neighboring countries to try to provide aid to northwest Syria, is it not?

Ms. POWER. It is. Again, part of what is happening across the board is the very substantial cuts are requiring cuts everywhere. So I think every region that is experiencing those cuts thinks that they are being singled out because of some policy shift.

But in fact when your budget shrinks by 40 percent and global needs go up in the humanitarian space and global needs go up by 35, 40 percent, you know, that's what we're facing.

So that's probably what is at work here. But I'm happy to dig into any specific——

Mr. HILL. I look forward to following up with you.

Mr. Chairman, I yield back and I want to thank the Ambassador—the director for her hard work on behalf of America's interests around the world.

Yield back.

Ms. POWER. Thank you, Congressman.

Mr. SELF. I thank the administrator for her valuable testimony and for the members for their questions. The members may have more questions and I ask that you respond to those in writing.

Pursuant to committee rules, all members may have 5 days to submit statements, questions, and extraneous materials for the record subject to length limitations.

Without objection, the committee stands adjourned.

[Whereupon, at 5:37 p.m., the committee was adjourned.]

APPENDIX

MATERIAL SUBMITTED FOR THE HEARING RECORD



**COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
FULL COMMITTEE HEARING NOTICE**
U.S. HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES
WASHINGTON, DC 20515-6128

Michael T. McCaul (R-TX), Chairman

April 3, 2024

TO: MEMBERS OF THE COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS

You are respectfully requested to attend an OPEN hearing of the Committee on Foreign Affairs to be held at 2:00 p.m. in room 2172 of the Rayburn House Office Building. The hearing is available by live webcast on the Committee website at <https://foreignaffairs.house.gov/>.

DATE: Wednesday, April 10, 2024

TIME: 2:00 p.m.

LOCATION: 2172 RHOB

SUBJECT: USAID's Foreign Policy and International Development
Priorities in the Era of Great Power Competition

WITNESSES: The Honorable Samantha Power
Administrator
U.S. Agency for International Development

*NOTE: Witnesses may be added.

By Direction of the Chair

The Committee on Foreign Affairs seeks to make its facilities accessible to persons with disabilities. If you are in need of special accommodations, please call 202-226-8467 at least four business days in advance of the event, whenever practicable. Questions with regard to special accommodations in general (including availability of Committee materials in alternative formats and assistive listening devices) may be directed to the Committee.

COMMITTEE ON FOREIGN AFFAIRS
MINUTES OF FULL COMMITTEE HEARING

Day Wednesday Date April 10 Room 2172 RHOB

Starting Time 1440 Ending Time 1737

Recesses ☐ (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____) (____ to ____)

Presiding Member(s)

Chairman McCaul, Rep. Self

Check all of the following that apply:

Open Session ☒

Executive (closed) Session ☐

Televised ☒

Electronically Recorded (taped) ☒

Stenographic Record ☒

TITLE OF HEARING:

USAID's Foreign Policy and International Development Priorities in the Era of Great Power Competition

COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

Attached

NON-COMMITTEE MEMBERS PRESENT:

NA

HEARING WITNESSES: Same as meeting notice attached? Yes ☒ No ☐

(If "no", please list below and include title, agency, department, or organization.)

STATEMENTS FOR THE RECORD: *(List any statements submitted for the record.)*

Attached

TIME SCHEDULED TO RECONVENE _____

or

TIME ADJOURNED 1737

Meg Wagner
Full Committee Hearing Coordinator

Committee on Foreign Affairs

118th Congress

ATTENDANCE

Date: April 10, 2024

Representative	Present	Absent	Representative	Present	Absent
Mr. McCaul	X		Mr. Meeks	X	
Mr. Smith	X		Mr. Sherman	X	
Mr. Wilson	X		Mr. Connolly	X	
Mr. Perry		X	Mr. Keating	X	
Mr. Issa	X		Mr. Bera	X	
Mrs. Wagner	X		Mr. Castro	X	
Mr. Mast	X		Ms. Titus	X	
Mr. Burchett		X	Mr. Lieu		X
Mr. Green		X	Ms. Wild	X	
Mr. Barr	X		Mr. Phillips	X	
Mr. Jackson		X	Mr. Allred		X
Mrs. Kim	X		Mr. Kim		X
Mrs. Salazar		X	Ms. Jacobs	X	
Mr. Huizenga	X		Ms. Manning	X	
Mrs. Radewagen		X	Mrs. Cherfilus-McCormick	X	
Mr. Hill	X		Mr. Stanton	X	
Mr. Davidson	X		Ms. Dean	X	
Mr. Baird	X		Mr. Moskowitz	X	
Mr. Waltz		X	Mr. Jackson	X	
Mr. Kean	X		Mrs. Kamlager-Dove	X	
Mr. Lawler	X		Mr. Costa	X	
Mr. Mills	X		Mr. Crow	X	
Mr. McCormick	X		Mr. Amo	X	
Mr. Moran		X	Mr. Schneider	X	
Mr. James	X				
Mr. Self	X				

**The FY25 Budget Request:
 USAID's Foreign Policy and International Development Priorities in the Era of Great
 Power Competition
 House Foreign Affairs Committee
 2:00 PM, Wednesday, April 10, 2024
 Rayburn 2172
 Rep. Gerald E. Connolly (D-VA)**

President Biden's first three years in office can only be characterized as a vigorous effort to repair and restore the damage inflicted on the credibility and reputation of the United States by the previous administration. In a departure from former President Trump's great American withdrawal, President Biden has charted a path back to dignity and respect, using NATO as the arsenal of democracy to counteract our adversary's global march towards autocracy. As the United States has rallied international support both for Ukraine in its fight for democracy and to revitalize U.S. standing in the world, it is crucial that the U.S. Congress comes together to support a foreign assistance budget that reflects our core principles and priorities. I am pleased that the Biden Administration and USAID understand the importance of these efforts and have rooted the FY25 budget request in returning America to its place on the world stage.

The Biden Administration's FY25 foreign assistance budget request places a high priority on improving global health security and assisting other countries in enhancing their own capacity to fight diseases. I am proud that the administration will be aided by the Global Health Security Act, legislation I authored to ensure there is infrastructure at the highest levels of our government coordinating a response to global health threats. My legislation, signed into law as a part of the FY23 NDAA, led to the creation of a position of a Coordinator for Global Health Security, and two months ago, I was honored to welcome the appointment of Dr. Stephanie Psaki. Along those lines, I am glad to see the Biden administration once again prioritize global health security by requesting \$9.8 billion to combat infectious diseases, prevent child and maternal deaths, bolster nutrition, control the HIV/AIDS epidemic, and build the capacity of partner countries to prevent, detect, and respond to future infectious disease outbreaks to prevent them from becoming national or global emergencies. The administration must leverage this important legislative achievement and build on the global health security infrastructure we have created.

This budget request also ensures that Vladimir Putin's illegal and unprovoked war in Ukraine remains a strategic failure. The Biden administration has brought our NATO allies together to respond forcefully to Russia's attack and ensure vital support for Ukraine. Let us be clear: This is a battle between democracy and authoritarianism. I call upon Speaker Johnson, once again, to bring Ukraine funding up for a vote on the House of Representatives to send a clear message regarding Ukraine's territorial integrity and sovereignty. Failure to do so is a failure to recognize one of the greatest threats to the international order the United States has spent much of the post-World War II era building.

The threat posed by authoritarianism is not isolated to the battlefields of Ukraine; it has a real impact on our Indo-Pacific partners. For the United States to compete strategically, we must not only counter China's actions in the economic sphere, but we must also promote our own domestic economic activity and goals for an open and prosperous Indo-Pacific. That is why I

support the administration's request for \$2.1 billion in funding for the Indo-Pacific to push back against PRC aggression and advance a free and open, connected, prosperous, secure, and resilient region.

Finally, this budget request embraces the reestablishment of the United States as a global leader in foreign humanitarian assistance. President Trump proposed 20 percent cuts to the foreign aid budget every year he was in office. The FY25 budget request continues the reversal of this horrifying trend, requesting \$10.3 billion in humanitarian assistance. It also reopens our doors to those seeking safety, providing \$3.82 million for the Migration and Refugee Assistance account, including funding to admit 125,000 refugees. I firmly believe this number should be our floor, not our ceiling, as outlined in my legislation, the Lady Liberty Act of 2023 (H.R. 4156), but it is a welcome step in the right direction. While Republicans remain dead set on cutting foreign assistance by 20-30 percent, Democrats protected key accounts in FY24 to hold cuts to 10 percent. Still, the President's request reflects the moment and need for sustained U.S. foreign assistance.

I do want to register my disappointment once again that Congress has not enacted a comprehensive foreign assistance authorization measure into law since 1985, when I was a staffer on the Senate Foreign Relations Committee. This is something this Committee has tried to do through the Global Partnerships Act, a comprehensive reauthorization bill former Chairman Berman and I previously introduced. Congress has debated reauthorization bills, they've passed the House and Senate on numerous occasions, but the bills have inevitably stalled before making it to the President's desk. If we're serious about making diplomacy our priority over conflict and kinetic options, then this needs to change. For 60 years, we have signed the National Defense Authorization Act into law – in fact, it's frequently referred to as “must pass” legislation. There is simply no reason why foreign assistance reauthorization should not also be considered “must pass” legislation, and I believe that moving towards that goal would offer an immense benefit to our relationship with the rest of the world.

I am relieved to be working with an administration that understands the importance of United States leadership and using our foreign aid budget to advance U.S. interests and help those that need it most. Budgets are a statement of values, and I look forward to hearing from Administrator Power on her priorities for USAID funding in FY25, and where she believes Congress can help empower the federal government's premier foreign assistance agency.

ELECTION DEBATE LIVE: Sunak and Starmer clash over tax rises and 'broken' NHS

storyful.

White House Says State Department Has Not Found Israel to Have Violated Humanitarian Law

Storyful
2 April 2024



A White House spokesperson told press on April 2 that the United States had investigated several actions by Israeli forces in Gaza “in the past” and had not found “any incidents where the Israelis have violated international humanitarian law.”

White House National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby made the remarks in response to a question from Niall Stanage, an Irish-born columnist for The Hill, about a lack of conditions on US military assistance to Israel. The question followed up on an earlier response from Kirby to another journalist's question on the issue, during which Kirby said, “I know, you want us to hang some sort of condition over their neck.”

This video shows both Kirby's response to the earlier question and his response to Stanage.

Stanage asked Kirby why the White House did not impose any conditions on Israel's use of weapons, and cited a [presidential memorandum](#) issued February 8, that said the administration's policy was to “prevent arms transfers that risk facilitating or otherwise contributing to violations of human rights or international humanitarian law.”

“Is firing a missile at people delivering food and killing them not a violation of international humanitarian law?” Stanage asked, referring to the Israeli airstrikes that [killed seven aid workers](#) traveling in Gaza a day earlier.

Kirby rejected the assertion, saying: “Your question presumes, at this very early hour, that it was a deliberate strike, that they knew exactly what they were hitting, that they were hitting aid workers and did it on purpose, and there there's no evidence of that. I would remind you, sir, that we continue to look at incidents as they occur. The State Department has a process in place. And to date, as you and I are speaking, they have not found any incidents where the Israelis have violated international humanitarian law.”

“They have never violated international humanitarian law, ever, in the past five to six months?” Stanage asked.

“The State Department has looked at incidents in the past and has yet to determine if any of those incidents violate international humanitarian law,” Kirby replied. Credit: The White House via Storyful

Video transcript

- On the death of those World Central Kitchen Aid workers, which includes one American who was killed, Netanyahu's reaction was, quote, "It happens in war." What is your reaction to that comment from Netanyahu?

JOHN KIRBY: I don't think it'd be useful for me to get into a tit-for-tat here with the Prime Minister of Israel from the podium. We've been very clear about our expectations for this investigation. We noted that the prime minister said himself, there will be an investigation. So has his military said that. We look forward to that investigation being thorough and swiftly done, and as I said, that it will be transparent, the results of it, and that if there's accountability that needs to be had, that it will be had.

- But how can you take Netanyahu at his word? As Nancy was saying, this was a de-conflicted zone. They had marked their car. They had even coordinated their movements with the IDF.

JOHN KIRBY: Yeah, and as I said in my opening statement, obviously, setting aside this incident, because this isn't the first one, there are issues of deconfliction that clearly need to be fleshed out and improved.

- So how can the US continue to send aid to Israel without any conditions? Yes, they have a right to--

JOHN KIRBY: We're not sending aid to Israel. We're sending aid into Gaza. And that's--

- The weapons. How can the US continue to send military aid--

JOHN KIRBY: Oh, military assistance.

- --to Israel without any conditions? Is there no red line that can be crossed?

JOHN KIRBY: We've had this-- we've had this discussion, you and me, quite a bit from up here. They're still under a viable threat of Hamas. We're still going to make sure that they can defend themselves and that 7th of October doesn't happen again. That doesn't mean that it's a free pass, that we look the other way when something like this happens, or that we aren't, and haven't since the beginning of the conflict, urged the Israelis to be more precise, to be more careful, and quite frankly, to increase the amount of humanitarian assistance that gets in. I haven't been asked about it yet. But I expect that I would be.

There was a discussion just yesterday with our Israeli counterparts about Rafah. Now, this one was done virtually. We expect it will be an in-person meeting here in a week's time or so. But the whole reason to have that meeting was to talk about our concerns over a major ground operation in Rafah and to present viable alternatives for them to be more precise and more targeted. So the idea that we're some plastic graveyard here and we're not paying attention to the civilian casualties or the civilian suffering is just not true.

- Right. But these are verbal urgings, verbal commitments. There's no other incentive besides the urgings and the discussions.

JOHN KIRBY: I know. You want us to-- you want us to hang some sort of condition over their neck. And what I'm telling you is that we continue to work with the Israelis to make sure that they are as precise as they can be and that more aid is getting in. And we're going to continue to take that approach.

- All right, thanks, John. I just wanted to follow up with a question that came from the front row about the conditions on military aid. And you said that the questioner wanted you to hang some conditions over their necks, the Israelis. And your tone suggested you wouldn't do that. Why not?

JOHN KIRBY: I've already answered this question a whole bunch of times. We believe that the approach that we're taking is working in terms of making it clear to the Israelis what our expectations are. I'm not going to get ahead of decisions one way or another that we might take in the future. What I'm saying is right now, we are continuing to support Israel because they continue to need military assistance, because they continue to face a viable threat.

- But on the point of conditions, the president on February 8 issued a memo. And it said-- you already know this, but just for context-- it said that it was the policy of this administration to prevent arms transfers that risk facilitating or otherwise contributing to violations of human rights or international humanitarian law. Is firing a missile at people delivering food and killing them not a violation of international humanitarian law?

JOHN KIRBY: Well, the Israelis have already admitted that this was a mistake that they made. They're doing an investigation. They'll get to the

bottom of this. Let's not get ahead of that. Your question presumes, at this very early hour, that it was a deliberate strike, that they knew exactly what they were hitting, that they were hitting aid workers and did it on purpose. And there's no evidence of that. I would also remind you, sir, that we continue to look at incidents as they occur. The State Department has a process in place. And to date, as you and I are speaking, they have not found any incidents where the Israelis have violated international humanitarian law. And lest you think we don't take it seriously, I can assure you that we do. We look at this in real time.

- They have never violated international humanitarian law ever in the past five to six months?

JOHN KIRBY: I'm telling you, the State Department has looked at incidents in the past and has yet to determine that any of those incidents violate international humanitarian law.

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POLITICO



ISRAEL-HAMAS WAR

Top Biden adviser reveals she confronted Netanyahu

Samantha Power revealed the details of her conversation with Netanyahu at POLITICO's Health Care Summit today in Washington.

By DANIEL PAYNE
03/13/2024 02:47 PM EDT
Updated: 03/13/2024 02:59 PM EDT



Samantha Power, the administrator of the U.S. Agency for International Development, asked Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu “to improve compliance with international humanitarian law” during her visit to Israel late last month.

Power revealed the details of her conversation with Netanyahu at POLITICO’s Health Care Summit today in Washington.

Advertisement

“Even if Hamas doesn’t care about civilian life, and it’s proven that again and again, that doesn’t relieve the obligation of a combatant to observe those principles,” she said. “Clearly, more needs to be done.”

Power, echoing President Joe Biden, reiterated the administration’s position

that Israel must not attack Rafah, the city in the Gaza Strip where more than 1 million Palestinians have taken refuge from Israeli bombing.

She said the city in Gaza is a major pipeline for humanitarian and medical assistance.

“To the degree there is humanitarian infrastructure, it is in Rafah,” she said.

Power said an Israeli assault on the city would undermine the U.S. plan to build a pier to offload aid to Gaza from the Mediterranean Sea.

Her comments are among increasingly blunt messages from the Biden administration to Israel about its actions in Gaza — and come as Senate Democrats have said [blocking weapons shipments](#) to Israel is on the table should Netanyahu go ahead with an invasion.

Netanyahu has [vowed to invade](#) — Israel says Hamas fighters are hiding in the city — even after Biden said the action would be a “red line.”

Power called out the medical, hunger and sanitary threats to Palestinians, but she demurred when asked at the summit about pro-Palestinian activists' labeling of the war as genocide.

"My focus is on saving as many lives as we can and scaling the humanitarian operation, and that will continue to be my focus," she said.

Still, people sympathetic to the Palestinians' plight have pressed the administration to do more. Some of Power's own staff have [criticized her](#) for not standing up to the White House over the Biden administration's support of Israel.

Though aid delivery efforts are ongoing, it's not enough, Power said.

"We need to go well beyond that," she said.

FILED UNDER: USAID, BENJAMIN NETANYAHU, HUMAN RIGHTS, GAZA, SAMANTHA POWER, 

Playbook

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USAID's Samantha Power confronted by staff over Biden's Gaza po... <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/01/31/sam...>

The Washington Post
Democracy Dies in Darkness

USAID's Samantha Power, genocide scholar, confronted by staff on Gaza

A prominent adviser to President Biden, Power was challenged publicly over the administration's policy, with one employee saying it has 'left us unable to be moral leaders'



By John Hudson

January 31, 2024 at 6:55 p.m. EST

Samantha Power, head of the U.S. Agency for International Development and a world-renowned scholar on genocide, was pointedly challenged by current and former USAID employees who during a public event Tuesday questioned her stance on the [war in Gaza](#) and complicity in the divisive U.S. policy.

"You wrote a book on genocide and you're still working for the administration: You should resign and speak out," said Agnieszka Sykes, a global health specialist who told The Washington Post she left her job at USAID late last week.

Sykes interrupted a speech Power was giving in Washington on climate change and natural disasters to invoke Power's book "A Problem from Hell." The Pulitzer Prize-winning work examines and condemns U.S. inaction on various atrocities, from Armenia to Rwanda, spanning several presidential administrations.

Israel-Gaza war

Some [residents are returning to the ravaged city of Khan Younis](#) after Israel [withdrew all but one brigade](#) from southern Gaza. Meanwhile, a new round of cease-fire negotiations began this week in Cairo.

For context: Understand what's [behind the Israel-Gaza war](#).

(Said Khatib/AFP/Getty Images)

Like other members of President Biden's National Security Council, Power oversees an agency deeply divided about Washington's military support for Israel's war in Gaza and refusal to demand a cease-fire.

But she is unique in being publicly confronted by her own workforce over the administration's policy — a reflection of what USAID officials say is her long body of work on this subject and her organization's responsibility to respond to distressed Gazans' suffering from a lack of food, water and medicine amid Israel's devastating military

USAID's Samantha Power confronted by staff over Biden's Gaza no... <https://www.washingtonpost.com/national-security/2024/01/31/sam...>
 sideline watching things that one would wish to see happen ... differently," she said.

The interaction marks the first clash between Power and current and former USAID employees at a public event, but she has encountered dissent in other ways. In November, hundreds of USAID employees endorsed a letter calling for a cease-fire in Gaza. Liberal activists at MoveOn are circulating a petition calling on her to resign or return her Pulitzer Prize, considered the preeminent recognition of influential journalism and other published works.

She also came under criticism for not publicly disclosing the killing of a USAID contractor who died after a suspected Israeli strike in Gaza in November. Power has said that in all of her high-level discussions about the conflict, she has made protection of aid workers a priority.

"There is not a single call that President Biden makes or engagement that anybody in the Biden administration does that doesn't put the importance of civilian protection and international humanitarian law at the at the top of the conversation," she said during the Tuesday forum.

Sykes, when asked about Power's response to her public challenge on Tuesday, said she was disappointed Power's chronology of the conflict began Oct. 7 without touching on the "past 75 years of Palestinians being violently forced off their ancestral land."

"I am a lifelong Democrat but this administration's vetoing of a cease-fire and enabling of genocide does not bode well for the Democratic Party," she said in an interview.