

The clerk will call the roll.

The senior assistant executive clerk called the roll.

Mr. THUNE. The following Senator is necessarily absent: the Senator from Wyoming (Mr. BARRASSO.)

The result was announced—yeas 67, nays 32, as follows:

[Rollcall Vote No. 21 Ex.]

#### YEAS—67

Baldwin	Hassan	Reed
Bennet	Heinrich	Romney
Blumenthal	Hickenlooper	Rosen
Booker	Hirono	Rounds
Braun	Hyde-Smith	Sanders
Brown	Kaine	Schatz
Butler	Kelly	Schumer
Cantwell	Kennedy	Shaheen
Capito	King	Sinema
Cardin	Klobuchar	Smith
Carper	Lankford	Stabenow
Casey	Lujan	Tester
Cassidy	Manchin	Tillis
Collins	Markey	Van Hollen
Coons	McConnell	Warner
Cornyn	Menendez	Warnock
Cortez Masto	Merkley	Warren
Cramer	Murkowski	Welch
Duckworth	Murphy	Whitehouse
Durbin	Murray	Wyden
Fetterman	Ossoff	Yngren
Gillibrand	Padilla	Young
Graham	Peters	

#### NAYS—32

Blackburn	Hagerty	Risch
Boozman	Hawley	Rubio
Britt	Hoeben	Schmitt
Budd	Johnson	Scott (FL)
Cotton	Lee	Scott (SC)
Crapo	Lummis	Sullivan
Cruz	Marshall	Thune
Daines	Moran	Tuberville
Ernst	Mullin	Vance
Fischer	Paul	Wicker
Grassley	Ricketts	

#### NOT VOTING—1

Barrasso

The nomination was confirmed.

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). Under the previous order, the motion to reconsider is considered made and laid upon the table, and the President will be immediately notified of the Senate's action.

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senate will resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant executive clerk read the nomination of Gretchen S. Lund, of Indiana, to be United States District Judge for the Northern District of Indiana.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

#### GAZA

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I would like to say a few words about the urgent humanitarian catastrophe now unfolding in Gaza. The reason I want to do that is I just have the feeling that most people—maybe here in the Senate and throughout the country—are just not aware of how severe the situation has become.

My staff and I have had a number of conversations in recent days with the United Nations, the World Food Programme, and other humanitarian actors struggling to deal with the horrors

unfolding in Gaza. Here is the bottom line: The coming weeks could mean the difference between life and death for tens of thousands of people. If we do not see a dramatic improvement in humanitarian access very soon, countless innocent people, including thousands of children, could die of dehydration, diarrhea, preventable diseases, and starvation. The World Health Organization predicts that the number of deaths from sickness and starvation could exceed the 25,000 people who died from Israeli bombs.

Let's be clear: What is going on in Gaza today is a man-made crisis. This is not a natural disaster. This is not climate change. This is a man-made crisis taking place right now, and it is the direct result of choices made by political leaders—none more than Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the leader of Israel's extreme rightwing government.

We all know that Hamas—a terrorist organization—began this war with its horrific attack on October 7, which killed 1,200 innocent Israeli men, women, and children, and took more than 200 hostages. Israel, in my view, had the right to respond to that attack and go after Hamas, but it did not and does not have the right to go after the entire Palestinian people, which is exactly what is happening right now.

Let me try to provide a picture, a snapshot, of what life in Gaza is like today. More than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed in this war so far—and, remember, the population of Gaza is just a bit over 2 million—25,000 are dead already; 62,000 have been wounded. And 70 percent of the dead are women and children—70 percent of the dead are women and children. At least 210 Palestinians have been killed in the last 24 hours. Overall, 152 United Nations aid workers have been killed so far—more U.N. losses than in any previous war.

When we look at what is going on in Gaza now, we must understand that 1.7 million people have been driven from their homes—85 percent of the entire population of Gaza. Imagine that: 85 percent of the population removed from their homes. Then, as a result of Israeli bombardment, 70 percent of the housing units have been damaged or destroyed—an unprecedented level of destruction.

Most of Gaza's critical infrastructure has been destroyed or made inoperable, including many water wells, bakeries, powerplants, hospitals, and sewage treatment facilities.

Importantly, much of the area has been without cell phone service for weeks, making communication very difficult. How do you know what is going on, how do you know what kind of bombing may be taking place if you don't have a cell phone that is working?

The fighting and Israeli restrictions have made it nearly impossible for food, water, fuel, and medical supplies to enter Gaza. Water is scarce, and

what little is available is often contaminated. Children are drinking very polluted water. Public wells are operating at just 10-percent capacity, and just one of three water pipelines into Gaza is functioning.

For several months now, children in southern Gaza are surviving on just 1½ or 2 liters of water per day—far, far below what is needed. And that is in the area where the U.N. can reach. The situation is worse elsewhere.

The lack of clean drinking water is leading to a spike in water-borne diseases and diarrhea—a very serious condition which accounts for nearly 10 percent of all deaths among children under the age of 5 worldwide. In Gaza, the U.N. reports 158,000 cases—more than half among children under the age of 5—a 4,000-percent increase in diarrhea from before the war began.

We have heard from humanitarian groups last week that they fear many thousands of children will die from diarrhea before they starve to death. What a horrible reality we are looking at in Gaza right now.

Hunger and starvation are widespread. Before the war, Gaza had 97 bakeries producing the bread and other basics that people need. Right now, just 15 of those bakeries are operating, and none are functioning in the north, closed by the combination of airstrikes and a lack of fuel and flour.

Hundreds of thousands of children go to bed hungry every night. We have all seen the scenes of desperate people mobbing the few U.N. relief trucks that can reach beyond the border crossing. They see food coming, and they mob those trucks.

Right now, the United Nations says that 570,000 people in Gaza, including small kids, are currently facing “catastrophic hunger”—that is their definition—which is equivalent to famine. This is the most severe category of starvation, but the U.N. reports that “the entire population of Gaza—roughly 2.2 million people—are in crisis or worse levels of acute food insecurity.” In other words, virtually every household is regularly skipping meals, and most are down to a single meal a day; often, just bread.

Experts tell us that infants and young people will succumb first to hunger. Without enough food and with no clean water to make formula, their vital organs will begin to shut down. Many will die of infection before they reach that point.

I have difficulty, on a personal level, even using the technical term for this stage. The technical term is “child wasting.” I find that term absolutely horrific. Yet that is what we are watching unfold in slow motion as the world looks on: children starving, drinking polluted water, suffering from dehydration, getting sick, and slowly dying.

In the midst of all of this, Gaza's healthcare system is under tremendous strain. Faced with over 87,000 casualties—figures that would overwhelm the

most sophisticated health system in the world—health workers there have worked to save lives amid frequent bombardment in overcrowded hospitals without electricity or adequate fuel or medicine. And in the midst of all of this, over 300 health workers have been killed.

The lack of basic necessities and overcrowded conditions are contributing to a dramatic increase in disease, and 10 percent of the population now has acute respiratory infections. Those with long-term medical conditions that require advanced treatment have little hope of receiving adequate care.

Amidst this devastation, approximately 180 women give birth in Gaza every day, facing unbelievable dangers and completely inadequate medical care. Without enough food or clean water, let alone necessary medications and antibiotics, many of these women face serious complications, and their children will bear lifelong scars from this war.

That is just a bit of the story in terms of what is happening in Gaza right now—a story that we cannot continue to ignore.

Let me say a word about why this is happening, about what the immediate causes of this humanitarian disaster are. The answer is not complicated. At every step of the way, the Israeli Government has failed to provide even the most basic protections to civilians. Every humanitarian move has been extracted only after weeks of delay and outside pressure from the United States and others.

The result of all of this is that today, just 20 to 30 percent of what is needed in humanitarian aid is being brought into Gaza. There is not enough food. There is not enough water. There are not enough medical supplies. There is not enough fuel.

Onerous Israeli border inspections are a major cause of this crisis. Today, there is a 3- to 4-week wait for trucks to get into Gaza, while children are starving. Many trucks are unloaded and reloaded numerous times, often to be searched for the same items.

It is understandable that Israel wants to ensure that no weapons are reaching Hamas. We all understand that. But senior U.S. officials tell us that they have seen no evidence of Hamas theft or diversion of U.N. aid. Meanwhile, Israel is rejecting things like tent poles, feminine hygiene kits, hand sanitizers, water testing kits, and medical supplies. If a single item in a truck is rejected, then the whole truck has to go back to the start of the process, causing enormous delays. Kerem Shalom crossing, the main entry point equipped to process trucks in large numbers, is only open 8 hours a day.

I want to thank our colleagues Senator VAN HOLLEN and Senator MERKLEY for their courage in going to the Egyptian-Gaza border and coming back here and reporting to us their personal observations of the crisis there.

It is hard to see this process and not conclude that what is taking place is a

deliberate effort to slow humanitarian aid. Sure enough, just last week, Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel is only allowing in the absolute minimum amount necessary.

When trucks do eventually get across the border, they face a whole new set of problems. Israel is bombing targets across Gaza, and its ground forces are fighting across much of the enclave and have closed many major roads. For aid trucks to move safely and avoid being bombed or shot, every movement must be cleared with the Israeli Defense Forces.

This deconfliction process has repeatedly failed. Even when notified, Israel has sometimes hit aid convoys. Medical facilities and humanitarian shelters cleared with Israelis have been struck numerous times. Tragically, the first half of January actually saw a deterioration in humanitarian access. In that period, Israel denied 95 percent of U.N. attempts to bring fuel and medicines to water wells and health facilities in north Gaza.

Netanyahu's rightwing government is starving the Palestinian people. On top of its indiscriminate bombardment, Israel is imposing onerous restrictions that are blocking the delivery of essential humanitarian aid.

All of this is unacceptable. We are running out of time as we face one of the most severe humanitarian catastrophes of recent times.

This should not be seen as just a terrible crisis taking place many thousands of miles away from our shores. This is a tragedy in which we, the United States of America, are complicit.

Much of what is happening right now is being done with U.S. arms and military equipment. In other words, whether we like it or not, the United States is complicit in the nightmare that millions of Palestinians are now experiencing.

In my view, Israel must take urgent steps immediately to open up humanitarian access. The water pipelines must be rapidly repaired and reopened. More border crossings, including in the north, must be opened. Inspections must be streamlined and sped up. Deconfliction of aid deliveries must be prioritized. And Israel must stop blocking essential humanitarian supplies.

These are not new issues. These are concerns that have been repeatedly communicated to the Israeli Government for months by the United States, by the U.N., and, in fact, by the global community. But the Israeli Government has refused—refused—to take these steps.

This has got to change now. Tens of thousands of lives hang in the balance. If we care about human rights and if we believe in the dignity of every human life, as we so often profess, we cannot allow this gruesome and horrible situation to continue. This is an urgent, unspeakable crisis. Every day matters, and we must act and act now.

Israel is not doing what is needed, despite the repeated pleas of the U.S.

Government and the President of the United States. That is why, in my view, we need to use every tool at our disposal to make Netanyahu change the direction he has taken.

As part of that effort, last week, the Senate voted on what I consider to be a very modest step, a resolution requiring the State Department to report on any human rights violations that may have occurred in Israel's military campaign in Gaza. The resolution was based on longstanding U.S. law requiring that any security assistance or military equipment provided to any country be used in line with internationally recognized human rights. That is what that resolution was about.

This is not a radical idea: making sure that the weapons we supply any country are used consistent with American law and international law. Yet just 11 U.S. Senators voted for that resolution.

We cannot continue turning a blind eye to the suffering in Gaza and the humanitarian catastrophe that is unfolding there. We cannot continue to ignore the fact that it has been American bombs and military equipment that has helped create this crisis.

Given the scale of the disaster, how could any Member of the Senate tell us that they do not want to know how billions in U.S. military aid is being used? How can we not want to have that very simple information?

My colleagues and I will continue to push for this information, which is absolutely necessary for Congress to conduct its oversight duties. But in addition to getting answers, I believe the United States must use all of our leverage to end this horrific war. And the primary leverage that we have over the Israeli Government is the billions of dollars in military aid we provide to them every year and the \$14 billion being proposed for Israel in the supplemental budget.

Madam President, in my view, we must loudly and clearly say no to Netanyahu's indiscriminate bombing, no to this manmade humanitarian catastrophe, and no to the unprecedented level of human suffering that is taking place in Gaza now. We must use our leverage to demand an end to the bombing, a humanitarian ceasefire to allow aid to flow to those who are suffering, and to secure the release of the more than 130 hostages still being held in Gaza. We must also demand that the Israeli Government begin the necessary work to lay the groundwork for a two-state solution.

Bottom line: There is a horrific catastrophe taking place right now. We cannot continue to ignore it. We must act.

I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The Senator from Rhode Island.

U.S. SUPREME COURT

Mr. WHITEHOUSE. Madam President, let me get to the point at hand. I