

and, reportedly, little progress has been made.

The capital city of the State of Vermont has not had a functioning post office for over a year. It is not a distinction we value. You know, the Postal Service has an internal benchmark of restoring retail service within 180 days of a natural disaster. They are now 256 days overdue. This failure is real and has very practical impacts on our constituents. Right now, Vermonters who live in Montpelier have to drive 7 miles if they want to buy a stamp or mail a package, and it is obviously very burdensome for our businesses.

The U.S. Postal Service and the Postmaster General, Louis DeJoy—let me be frank. They have really failed to deliver. And it is shocking to me, but we have had instances where Senator SANDERS and I and Congresswoman BALINT have tried to interact with the Postal Service, and he is silent, non-responsive. That is really an insult to the people of Vermont when they need this and can't even get an answer about what is going on.

So this is not your standard, run-of-the-mill management failure of the USPS. No. This is really a dereliction of duty, in my view, by Postmaster General DeJoy. He is choosing not to open a post office—a task his Agency has done thousands of times quickly in their 250-year history.

While the Postal Service may be independent, it is not without oversight. It does not have the authority to disregard the input of the public who so needs the services or congressional representatives, and it does not have the authority to act contrary to its statutory obligations.

I want to close by saying again that I stand ready and willing to work with any of my colleagues to get this disaster relief done. We cannot recover or rebuild without the Federal assistance that all of us in every State that has had a catastrophe, a weather event. We need the help, and we all have to help one another, not only for Vermont but for every community that needs help and will need help in the future.

Madam President, you know we can get this done. We have done it before for our constituents. But the delay is going on too long. It is that simple.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I am here for another reason this evening, but I wanted to concur with Senator WELCH. Obviously, we need more Federal disaster relief, we need reforms in FEMA, and we certainly need a permanent post office in Montpelier, VT. So I want to thank Senator WELCH for his work in that area.

ISRAEL

Madam President, in a few weeks' time, we will mark the 1-year anniversary of the war in the Middle East. It has been almost 1 year since Hamas's horrific terrorist rampage on October

7, which killed 1,200 innocent Israelis and took hundreds of hostages, including Americans. As I have said many times, Israel had an absolute right to defend itself and respond to the Hamas attack.

But, tragically, Prime Minister Netanyahu's extremist government has not simply waged war against Hamas; it has waged all-out war against the Palestinian people. Israel has conducted this war with little regard for innocent civilians, bombing indiscriminately, and severely restricting the humanitarian relief operation needed by desperate people.

After nearly 1 year of this carnage, out of a population of some 2.2 million people, more than 41,000 Palestinians have been killed and nearly 95,000 injured, 60 percent of whom are women, children, or elderly people. Let me repeat—60 percent of whom are women, children, or elderly people.

Netanyahu's policies have trampled on international law, made life unlivable in Gaza, and created one of the worst humanitarian disasters in modern history.

We cannot continue to turn a blind eye to the scale of the suffering caused by this all-out war against the Palestinian people—136,000 casualties, most of whom are civilians. The full toll is likely even higher, with thousands of bodies buried beneath the rubble.

Madam President, 90 percent of Gazans—90 percent of the people in Gaza—have been displaced from their homes, 1.9 million people. Many families have been displaced again and again and again, forced to uproot their lives and pick their way across a war zone with their children and what little they can carry. These are poor people going from place to place amid bombing and total destruction. When these families find, finally, a safe place to seek refuge, perhaps setting up a tent in a so-called safe zone, they are often then forced to evacuate due to renewed Israeli bombing.

Few of these people even have homes to ever return to. More than 60 percent of Gaza's housing has been damaged or destroyed, including 221,000 housing units that have been completely destroyed. Imagine—imagine—going from place to place, knowing that you are never going to be able to return to your home.

Today, as a result of the devastation of housing in Gaza, more than 1 million people are homeless. I would ask my colleagues to try to think for a moment what it means to be carrying your children from place to place in the heat, without food, without water, knowing that your home that you came from has been destroyed. That is what is going on today.

What we are witnessing now is not just the loss of human life, as severe and horrible as that is; Gaza's civilian infrastructure has been devastated, including water and sewage systems. Raw sewage runs through the streets, spreading disease. Clean water is still

in short supply. Most of the roads in Gaza are impassable, torn up by bombing and bulldozers. There is virtually no electricity right now.

But it is not just Gaza's infrastructure. The Netanyahu government has systematically—systematically—and I have talked to doctors about this—devastated the healthcare system in Gaza, knocking 19 hospitals out of service and killing more than 800 healthcare workers. So you have 95,000 people who have been injured, including a lot of children, and you have 19 hospitals that have been knocked out of service.

The World Health Organization has recorded thousands of attacks on healthcare facilities. Not surprisingly, with the collapse of the healthcare system, under the strain, diseases like hepatitis, dysentery, polio, and other infections have taken hold.

Gaza has 12 universities. Every single one of them has been bombed, as have hundreds of schools. Eighty-eight percent of all school buildings in Gaza have been damaged. Every university bombed, 88 percent of all school buildings in Gaza have been damaged, and more than 500 people have been killed while sheltering in U.N. schools.

There are many, many hundreds of thousands of children in Gaza. It is a young—the Palestinian population is by and large young, a lot of children. Virtually none of them have been in school since this war began.

As horrific and unspeakable as all of this is, there is something even worse taking place in Gaza now; and that is, as a result of Israeli restrictions on humanitarian aid, people in Gaza are now starving to death.

Leading experts from the U.N. and other aid organizations estimate that some 495,000 Palestinians—a quarter of the population—face starvation. These groups estimate that more than 50,000 children require treatment now for acute malnutrition and are at risk of starving to death—50,000 kids facing malnutrition.

And I am not a doctor, but I know enough to tell you that will impact these children for the rest of their lives. That is what childhood malnutrition does.

Malnourished women struggle to breastfeed their newborns. Formula is inaccessible; and even when available, it cannot be used without reliable sources of clean water.

According to the U.N. and virtually every humanitarian organization functioning in Gaza, there is one primary reason for this starvation and suffering; and that is that Israel has severely restricted the amount of humanitarian aid, including food, water, and medical supplies that can reach the desperate people of Gaza. This is a clear violation of U.S. and international law—not just immoral, not just outrageous, but a clear violation of U.S. and international law.

Every day—every single day—the bombardment continues—bombing and shelling carried out with U.S.—provided

weaponry, often financed in large part by American taxpayers—U.S. weapons financed by U.S. taxpayers.

In the last year alone, Congress has voted to send more than \$10 billion in American taxpayer dollars to the extremist Israeli government to buy more of the bombs and more of the weapons to wage war against the Palestinian people.

Enough is enough. U.S. complicity in this horrific war must end.

With a group of colleagues, I will soon be introducing a number of joint resolutions of disapproval, which would block some \$20 billion in new arms sales to Israel. Resolutions of disapproval are the only tool Congress has to block arms sales, which are inconsistent with established U.S. and international law. The Senate will vote on these measures.

Let me outline briefly why it is critical that we prevent these sales from going forward. I have laid out the horrible reality of the situation in Gaza. But the sad truth is that much of this carnage has been carried out with U.S.-provided military equipment.

Put simply, providing more offensive weapons to continue this disastrous war would be immoral. It would also be illegal.

These sales directly contradict the stated purpose of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 and the Arms Export Control Act. These laws require that U.S. arms transfers to foreign countries must be consistent with internationally recognized human rights, advance U.S. foreign policy interests, and avoid U.S. complicity with any human rights violations. That is the purpose of these laws.

During the August recess, the administration sent to Congress official notices for several sales to Israel that clearly do not meet these criteria. The arms sales total over \$20 billion and include transfers of Joint Direct Attack Munitions, or JDAMs; 120-mm tank rounds; 120-mm high explosive mortar rounds; Medium Tactical Vehicles; and up to 50 new F-15 fighter aircraft, as well as upgrades for some of Israel's current F-15s.

All of these systems have been used in Gaza, causing massive death and suffering to innocent men, women, and children.

The JDAMs and 120-mm tank rounds, in particular, have been used indiscriminately and are responsible for a significant portion of the civilian casualties. Reliable human rights monitors have painstakingly documented numerous specific incidents involving these systems leading to unacceptable civilian death and harm. There is a mountain of documentary evidence regarding this.

Hundreds of eyewitness testimonies, photographs, videos, and satellite imagery all underscore one simple point: These weapons are being used in violation of U.S. and international law.

I have a list here of some of the most egregious incidents involving these

systems. Tragically, the list is too long for me to read here on the floor.

Madam President, I ask unanimous consent to have the list printed in the RECORD.

There being no objection, the material was ordered to be printed in the RECORD, as follows:

Regarding JDAMs, these incidents include but are not limited to:

On October 10, 2023, an Israeli strike with a U.S. JDAM in Deir al-Balah killed 24, including 7 children.

On October 10, 2023, an Israeli strike with a U.S. JDAM in Deir al-Balah killed 19, including 12 children.

On October 31, 2023, an Israeli strike with U.S. JDAMs in Jabalia killed at least 126 civilians, including 69 children.

On January 18, 2024, an Israeli strike with a U.S. JDAM in al-Mawasi targeted a humanitarian facility.

On March 27, 2024, an Israeli strike with a U.S. JDAM in al-Habariyeh, Lebanon killed 7 healthcare workers.

On July 13, 2024, an Israeli strike with a U.S. JDAM in al-Mawasi killed at least 90 Palestinians—at least half of whom were women and children—and injured at least 300.

Regarding the 120mm tank rounds, these incidents include but are not limited to:

On October 13, 2023, Israeli forces attacked several journalists with 120mm tank ammunition in southern Lebanon, killing Reuters' Issam Abdallah.

On January 29, 2024, Israeli forces used U.S. 120mm tank ammunition in Gaza City in an attack that killed six-year-old Hind Rajab and two paramedics.

On February 20, 2024, Israeli tanks fired upon a Medecins Sans Frontieres guesthouse in Khan Younis, killing two people and injuring six others.

On May 28, the Israeli military used 120mm tank rounds in al-Mawasi in an attack that killed 23 people, including 12 children.

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, the administration's report pursuant to National Security Memorandum 20 concluded that "it is reasonable to assess that defense articles . . . have been used by Israeli security forces since October 7 in instances inconsistent with its . . . [international humanitarian law] obligations or with established best practices for mitigating civilian harm." That is the administration.

The report stated that "high levels of civilian casualties, raise substantial questions as to whether the IDF is using [effective civilian harm mitigation] effectively in all cases." That is the administration.

It is not just the civilian casualties and the violations of international human rights. Other provisions of U.S. law are also applicable. Section 6201 of the Foreign Assistance Act also states that "No assistance shall be furnished . . . to any country when it is made known to the President that the government of such country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance."

The whole world has witnessed Israel's restriction of humanitarian aid. The U.N. and virtually every humanitarian group says that Israel's re-

strictive policies are the primary cause of the humanitarian catastrophe now taking place in Gaza. The administration says as much, admitting that "Israel did not fully cooperate with United States government efforts and the United States government-supported international efforts to maximize humanitarian assistance flow to and distribution within Gaza." In fact, frankly, that severely understates the reality.

No matter how people here in Washington may try to spin it, the simple fact is that we must end our complicity in Israel's illegal and indiscriminate military campaign, which has caused mass civilian death and suffering.

The law also says that arms sales must advance U.S. foreign policy interests. If we are going to sell arms, they must advance U.S. foreign policy interests.

These transfers, again, fall far short. These sales would reward Netanyahu's extremist government even as it flouts—openly flouts—U.S. policy goals at every turn and, in fact, drags the United States closer to a regional war.

For months, the Biden administration has been trying to reach a cease-fire deal that would secure the release of the hostages and allow massive amounts of humanitarian aid to flow into Gaza. Every time a deal appears close, Netanyahu moves the goalposts, introducing new demands and torpedoing the deal. It is clear to me that Netanyahu is prolonging the war in order to cling to power and avoid prosecution at home for corruption. That is why hundreds of thousands of Israelis routinely take to the streets to protest his policies.

But it is not just his sabotage of a cease-fire for hostage deal. Netanyahu has also overseen record settlement expansion in the West Bank and unleashed a wave of violence there that has killed nearly 700 Palestinians, including 150 children killed over the last 11 months. Because so much focus is on Gaza, we are not paying attention to the disaster taking place in the West Bank.

Americans have also been caught up in this bloodshed. On September 6, Israeli security forces shot a 26-year-old American recent college graduate in the head near an illegal settlement in the West Bank. In January, they shot and killed a 17-year-old American high school senior from Louisiana. In February, they shot and killed another 17-year-old American from Florida. And in October of last year, they nearly killed a constituent of mine from Vermont, Dylan Collins, a journalist for Agence France-Press, with two tank rounds. Six journalists were wounded in that attack, which killed a Reuters journalist. The group was clearly marked as "press." These are the same tank rounds the administration would provide to Israel in this sale.

Needless to say, there has been no—zero—accountability for these deaths.

And, of course, there has been no accountability for the repeated Israeli settler attacks, enabled by security forces, on Palestinian towns and villages; no meaningful response to the burning of Palestinian homes and businesses—nothing but silence in the face of a concerted rightwing Israeli effort to illegally annex the West Bank.

Yet those are the Netanyahu extremist government policies that these sales would reward. I say that to my colleagues. All of this is going on; and should our response to Mr. Netanyahu say: Keep it up, here are more arms; here are more money?

A government that has caused mass civilian deaths, flouted U.S. and international law, and that is actively undermining key U.S. policy goals in the region should not be receiving more financial aid from America and should not be receiving military weaponry from the United States.

Passing a joint resolution to block these sales will make clear to the Netanyahu government that they cannot continue to ignore the U.S. Government's demands for an immediate cease-fire and the release of the hostages. It will put pressure on its extremist government to change Israel's military approach and avert a regional war. And it may—just may—begin to restore a shred of U.S. credibility abroad.

Passing a joint resolution of disapproval is not only the right thing to do, it is not only the legal and appropriate thing to do, it is also what the American people want us to do. According to a June 5 poll from CBS News, 61 percent of Americans oppose sending weapons and supplies to Israel, including 77 percent of Democrats, 62 percent of Independents, and many Republicans as well. And that poll is consistent with earlier polls.

This is not a new or radical idea. The United States routinely conditions military aid, arms sales, and security cooperation with every other country. This ain't new. We have done it over and over again. And we have done it many times before with Israel. It is not a new idea. It is only in recent years that the idea of leveraging aid to Israel to secure policy changes has become controversial.

President Ronald Reagan, I say to my Republican colleagues, suspended the delivery of F-16 fighter jets to Israel over its raid on the Osirak reactor in Iraq; threatened to suspend military aid to end Israel's bombardment of Beirut; and again threatened to stop military aid to force an Israeli withdrawal from Lebanon in 1982. That was President Ronald Reagan. President Jimmy Carter similarly leveraged aid to change Israeli policies in Lebanon. In 1991, then-Secretary of State James Baker threatened to withhold \$10 billion in loan guarantees unless Israel stopped settlement expansion.

In other words, using arms sales and military aid as leverage is not a new idea. It has been done under Repub-

lican Presidents and Democratic Presidents.

There is also recent precedent of Congress's acting to stop the indiscriminate bombing of civilians. In 2019, Congress passed a series of JRDs to block arms sales to Saudi Arabia over its bombing campaign in Yemen. At that point, the Saudi coalition was directly responsible for, roughly, 8,000 civilian deaths over 4 years, mostly from airstrikes. Israel has killed 41,000 in less than a year.

Blocking these sales would also be in keeping with actions taken by the international community and some of our closest allies. So what I am suggesting here is not unique in the world. It has taken place all over the world, including with some of our closest allies. There has been widespread condemnation of Israel's conduct during this war from governments around the world, international institutions, and humanitarian organizations.

The United Kingdom recently suspended 30 export licenses for a range of armaments after concluding there was an unacceptable risk they could be used in violation of international humanitarian law. Germany has not approved an offensive weapons transfer since March. Italy, Spain, Canada, Belgium, and the Netherlands have taken similar steps. United Nations bodies have called for an end to the arms shipments fueling the conflict.

We cannot continue to ignore what the extremist Netanyahu government is doing in Gaza. We cannot continue to be complicit in this humanitarian disaster. The time is long overdue for the U.S. Senate to act, and we must act. I hope my colleagues will support this effort on the floor, and my office is ready to answer any questions that Senators may have.

I yield the floor.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Louisiana.

TRIBUTE TO HENSON WEBRE

Mr. KENNEDY. Madam President, with me today is one of my colleagues from my office, Mr. Henson Webre, whom I thank for giving so much to our State and our country.

HURRICANE FRANCINE

Madam President, the first topic that I want to touch briefly on today provokes both sorrow and pride.

I am sorry to report that, last week, my people in Louisiana were hit by yet another hurricane, Hurricane Francine. It was a category 2. It was right on the line between a category 1 and a category 2. We had winds of 100 miles an hour. We had 9 to 10 inches of rain. We had a vicious storm surge.

My people did what they always do: They got ready for it. They reacted to the storm with grace and with pressure. My people filled sandbags, and we checked on our neighbors, and we listened to our local officials. We said prayers for our first responders. My people are as tough as a pine knot. They are also compassionate. And we made it through.

Some have said: Well, compared to past hurricanes, Francine was not as bad as some in the past.

And that is true. It could always be worse. But that is cold comfort—cold comfort—for the thousands of Louisianians who sustained damage from that storm surge and those ferocious winds and that rain. And I want to assure my people that, as we have in the past, we will persevere, and we will make it through.

I have never, in my years in the Senate, voted against providing relief for any of our sister States and my fellow Senators who have asked for it and who have been the victims of a natural disaster, and I never will. That is the first role of government. It is to protect people and property. And I will never vote against aid for one of our sister States that, through no fault of its own, is struck by nature.

I say that because I will be asking the American people to help Louisiana one more time. We won't ask for a penny more than we need. The help that I will seek will be in the form of personal assistance in housing, for example; infrastructure assistance; and mitigation grants.

I want to thank President Biden and Governor Landry, with whom I toured by helicopter the damage last week. Governor Landry asked for a disaster declaration from the President, and President Biden was quick to agree. I want to thank him for that. I want to thank our FEMA Administrator, Ms. Deanne Criswell. She came to Louisiana immediately after the storm passed through, and I want to thank our Administrator for being on the ground and her personal touch.

One of the things I talked to the Administrator about is, as you know, FEMA has implemented a new flood insurance premium program called Risk Rating 2.0, which is breaking the backs of every insured in the Flood Insurance Program. Premiums have gone through the roof. I can assure you that the damages would have been much worse with respect to Francine had it not been for the investment that the American taxpayer and the taxpayers of Louisiana have made in new flood protection systems and new levees. And with that money that we have spent—including but not limited to the money by Louisiana citizens, who taxed themselves to build these levees—our people should be given credit on their flood insurance premiums for that investment they have made.

All you have to do is take Terrebonne Parish as an example. In Louisiana, we call our counties "parishes." Terrebonne Parish, at the southern part of my State, has spent over \$1 billion of their money—and we are not a wealthy State. My people in Terrebonne taxed themselves to help build a levee system called the Morganza to the Gulf levee system, which will mitigate the damages from this last storm.

Had it not been for the levee that my people taxed themselves to build—and,