

Hassan	Murphy	Shaheen
Heinrich	Murray	Smith
Hirono	Ossoff	Stabenow
Kaine	Padilla	Van Hollen
Kelly	Peters	Warner
Klobuchar	Reed	Warnock
Lujan	Rosen	Warren
Markey	Sanders	Welch
Menendez	Schatz	Whitehouse
Merkley	Schumer	Wyden

NOT VOTING—1

Cantwell

The PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. BUTLER). On this vote, the yeas are 54, the nays are 45.

Two-thirds of the Senators being duly chosen and sworn, a quorum being present, not having voted in the affirmative, the joint resolution on reconsideration fails to pass over the veto of the President of the United States.

EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

EXECUTIVE SESSION

The PRESIDING OFFICER. Under the previous order, the Senate will resume executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The senior assistant legislative clerk read the nomination of Erika L. McEntarfer, of the District of Columbia, to be Commissioner of Labor Statistics, Department of Labor, for a term of four years.

The PRESIDING OFFICER. The Senator from Vermont.

ISRAEL

Mr. SANDERS. Madam President, I would like to say a few words on the resolution I have introduced under section 502B of the Foreign Assistance Act, which I intend to bring to the floor next week. This resolution is privileged. We will have a floor debate on it, and there will be a vote.

There is some confusion, I think, regarding what this resolution does, and I want to say a few words about that.

Very sensibly, the Foreign Assistance Act requires that when the United States provides security assistance or arms to any country in the world, that assistance must be used in line with internationally recognized human rights. The act prohibits assistance to any government that engages in a consistent pattern of violation of human rights.

That is the law of the United States of America.

This act also provides Congress with several oversight tools to make sure that this law is, in fact, followed, and one of these tools is section 502B(c), which allows Congress to direct the State Department to provide a report on any country receiving U.S. security assistance and that government's observance or lack of observance of international human rights. That is what the law is about; and that is, in fact, exactly what this resolution does.

In line with existing law, it directs the State Department to provide any credible information it may have on

potential violations of internationally recognized human rights by Israel in its military campaign in Gaza.

It focuses in particular on the denial of the right to life, a human right enshrined in U.S. and international law caused by indiscriminate or disproportionate military operations, as well as by the denial of basic humanitarian needs and access.

It also asks for additional information on steps the United States has taken to limit civilian risk in this war; a certification that the Leahy laws are being fully applied; and a summary of the arms and munitions provided to Israel since October 7, when the war began. In essence, we will be voting on a very simple question. This is not a complicated question.

The question is: Do you support, as a Member of the Senate, asking the State Department whether human rights violations may have occurred using U.S. equipment or assistance in this war? That is what the resolution does—nothing more, nothing less.

This resolution is not prescriptive. It does not alter aid to Israel in any way. It does not cut one penny of aid. It simply requests that the State Department report on how U.S. aid is being used. The State Department then has 30 days to provide a report responding to the request.

To my mind, this is not a controversial resolution. Every one of us should want to know whether our U.S. military aid is being used in violation of international law or not. No matter what your view on the war may be, it is a simple question. And I hope that we can get widespread support for the resolution.

Now, let me say a word about why, in my view, this resolution is, in fact, necessary. It is no great secret that the United States has long been very supportive of Israel, providing billions of dollars a year in military aid, year after year after year. We have also provided a massive influx of arms and munitions since October 7, the day of Hamas's disgusting terrorist attack against Israel.

The Israeli military has made extensive use of these U.S. weapons in its campaign, including the widespread use of 2,000-pound bombs, 1,000-pound bombs, and 155-mm artillery.

On December 1, the Wall Street Journal reported that the U.S. has provided at least 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells to Israel since October 7, including more than 5,400 huge 2,000-pound bombs that can flatten entire neighborhoods. The Washington Post reported that in just 6 weeks after October 7, Israel dropped more than 22,000 American-supplied bombs on Gaza. CNN reported that 40 to 45 percent of the bombs used in Gaza have been unguided or what is called dumb bombs.

Let me be very clear. This aggressive military campaign has led to massive destruction and widespread civilian harm. There is extensive evidence

showing that this military campaign since October 7 in Gaza has been, far and away, the most intensive bombing campaign of the 21st century.

Independent human rights monitors and the press have extensively documented the use of U.S. arms in strikes leading to large numbers of civilian deaths and injuries.

The Israeli military campaign is not just something that concerns me or millions of Americans. It is also something that has been troubling to the entire international community. The U.N. General Assembly and U.N. Security Council have voted repeatedly and overwhelmingly to try to secure humanitarian access to stop the bombardments and to enact the humanitarian cease-fire. Unfortunately, our government has voted against or vetoed most of those efforts.

We all know that Hamas started this war with its brutal terrorist attack on October 7, an attack which resulted in the deaths of 1,200 innocent people, injuries of more, and the taking of over 200 hostages.

In my view, there is absolutely no question that Israel has the right to defend itself and respond against the perpetrators of that horrific attack; but while it is clear that Israel has the right to go to war against Hamas, in my view, it does not have the right to go to war against the entire Palestinian people, including many hundreds of thousands of innocent men, women, and children in Gaza.

Israel has relied on widespread bombardment, including with massive explosive ordinance in densely populated urban areas. This bombardment and the severe humanitarian restrictions have led to a catastrophe that veteran aid workers say goes beyond anything they have ever seen before.

And let me say a word. Let me be very clear about what the devastating humanitarian crisis in Gaza looks like right now, today. Up to now, some 23,000 Palestinians have been killed—70 percent of whom are women and children.

Let me repeat: Some 23,000 Palestinians—remember, we are talking about a population of a little over 2 million people. Some 23,000 Palestinians have been killed, 70 percent of whom are women and children.

More than 58,000 people have been wounded; 146 United Nations workers have been killed—more U.N. workers killed than in any previous war ever.

In Gaza—and this, again, is just unspeakable. In Gaza, 1.9 million people have been displaced by the bombing. They have been thrown out of their homes. And that is more than 85 percent of the population.

Can you imagine a population of some 2.2 million people and 85 percent of those people have been forced out of their homes? And many of those people today are homeless. And some 1.4 million of them are crowded into U.N. facilities which were never, ever, ever intended to be housing the kinds of populations that they are forced to house

today. And, today, tens of thousands of Palestinians are sleeping out in the cold as winter sets in.

What is also quite unbelievable is that over 70 percent of the housing units in Gaza have now been damaged or destroyed.

Let me repeat that. It is really quite unbelievable. It is a war that has gone on for 3 months—only 3 months—and 70 percent of the housing units in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed.

Unbelievably, according to a study by Professor Robert Pape of the University of Chicago, what that statistic of 70 percent destruction in housing means is that what is going on in Gaza after 3 months of war has surpassed the destruction that took place in Dresden during World War II.

I think when any person in America who knows anything about history or anybody around the world thinks about the city of Dresden, what comes to mind is the horrific bombardments that took place by U.S. and British Air Force and the destruction in the city. Those attacks during World War II took place over 2 years. The destruction in Gaza after 3 months, in terms of housing, is worse than what took place in Dresden over 2 years.

Now let me say a word about another horrific reality that is taking place in Gaza. So, above and beyond the death and destruction caused by bombs and the Israeli military campaign, what we are now looking at is the reality that Israel has made it extremely difficult from the very start of this war for food, water, medical supplies, and fuel to get into Gaza. This is no great secret. I think everybody knows it. The result of it is that, right now as we speak, starvation and hunger are a reality for the women, the children, and the men in Gaza—starvation.

The United Nations reports that more than 90 percent of the population there faces “acute food insecurity” and that virtually every household is skipping meals many days. Gaza is at risk of widespread famine in the coming weeks and months. Hundreds of thousands of children go to sleep hungry every night, and desperate Gazans—I think we have pictures of this—are mobbing the few U.N. relief trucks that can reach beyond the border crossing. These are hungry people who see a truck full of food, and they are attacking that truck and eating the food as quickly as they can.

Gaza’s healthcare system has collapsed, with little electricity, water, medicine, or fuel. Only 11 of Gaza’s 36 hospitals are able to function at all, and those that remain open can barely care for the patients who go to them.

The lack of sanitation and the destruction of the infrastructure there is leading to disease. In overcrowded U.N. facilities, thousands of people must share a single shower, and more than 220 people have to share a toilet. That is just a small piece of the horrible reality that is taking place in Gaza right now.

Now, some people may say: Well, you know, war is terrible, and this is war, and there is always collateral damage in war. But this is not just another war; this is wholesale destruction in an almost unprecedented manner. It is clear to me that the Netanyahu right-wing, extremist government in Israel is now waging this war in a deeply reckless and immoral way.

In other words, we all know that war is horrible and that we have to do a lot better than we are doing right now in trying to eliminate war on this planet. In war, there is always collateral damage, but something more is going on here right now.

I would mention to the Presiding Officer that many senior figures in the Netanyahu government have said things that only deepen the profound concern we should all feel about what is going on in Gaza today.

Several of these government officials have talked openly about reestablishing Israeli settlements in Gaza.

The current Intelligence Minister, among other senior officials, openly talks of permanently displacing Palestinians from Gaza.

The Defense Minister declared a “total siege” at the start of the war.

The Heritage Minister posted a picture of the devastation, saying Gaza was “more beautiful than ever, bombing and flattening everything.” All that destruction makes Gaza more beautiful than ever.

Another Israeli lawmaker said:

The Gaza Strip should be flattened, and there should be one sentence for everyone there—death. We have to wipe the Gaza Strip off the map. There are no innocents there.

I could go on and on with other terrible quotes from leading officials in the rightwing government of Netanyahu.

Given all of this—given the scale of the destruction, the unprecedented level of destruction, and the extent of use of U.S. arms in this campaign, including thousands of massive, 2,000-pound bombs—Congress must act to conduct real oversight. That is what the law is about, and that is why I hope we are going to have widespread support for the 502B resolution I will be offering next week.

The United States, whether we like it or not, is deeply complicit in what is going on in Gaza right now. Those are our weapons that are killing women and children in huge numbers, that are destroying homes in huge numbers, that are causing massive levels of injury, that are resulting in the hunger and the lack of medical care the people of Gaza are now experiencing.

I have supported Israel for many years, and many of my colleagues have as well. I don’t think there is any debate in Congress that Israel has a right to live in peace and security—something that has not always been the case. They have been subjected time and again to horrific terrorist attacks. They have the right to live in peace and security, but I do not believe we

are doing Israel any favors by ignoring what their policies are doing right now. Friends have to be prepared to tell friends the truth, and if Israel is a friend of ours, as it is, we have to tell them the truth. The truth is that, all over the world, people are outraged by Netanyahu’s campaigns and destruction against the Palestinian people in Gaza.

The Biden administration has urged Israel to change its tactics and to be more targeted in its military operations and to protect civilians. We have heard the President say this over and over again. We have heard Secretary Blinken say this over and over again. But the Netanyahu government clearly has not listened, and they have continued their very destructive war in violation of international law. Their war is in violation of international law. In my view, that approach is simply unacceptable and is not something we should be supportive of. In my view, the United States must end our complicity in what is going on in Gaza right now.

What this resolution is about, again, is not cutting one nickel of aid to Israel. That is not what this resolution does. And you don’t have to agree with me in terms of what I perceive is going on in Israel today. You can disagree with me completely. All this resolution does is ask for more information from the State Department, which allows us to determine whether or not Israel is violating international law. This is information Congress should have. Whatever your views on the war may be, this resolution should be something you can support. We are asking the State Department for information. That is what we are doing. That is all this resolution does.

If you believe that the military campaign in Gaza by Israel has been indiscriminate, as I do, then we have the responsibility to ask that question. If you believe that Israel has done nothing wrong, that what they are doing is consistent with international law, which is what the Israeli Government says, then the information coming from the State Department should buttress your belief.

So let me conclude by saying that we are not all likely to agree on the Israeli-Palestinian situation anytime soon, and we will have more chances to debate these issues if and when we consider a foreign aid supplemental bill, but asking for more information as to how American arms and security assistance are being used, particularly amid the level of death and destruction we are seeing in Gaza right now, should not be controversial. In fact, it is exactly what our job is.

With that, I yield the floor.

THE PRESIDING OFFICER (Ms. CORTEZ MASTO). The majority leader.

CLOSURE MOTION WITHDRAWN

Mr. SCHUMER. Madam President, I ask unanimous consent that the closure motion with respect to the Mehalchick nomination be withdrawn.