

The United States Must Enforce the Leahy Law

LA Jews for Peace Policy Statement¹, April 6, 2018

LA Jews for Peace supports and encourages Congressional actions to restrict American arms sales to countries that violate human rights and/or engage in aggressive military action. We stand on the moral principle that the United States government must not support or enable other government violations of human rights or unilateral aggressive military attacks on their neighbors. The United States must work to stop killing innocent civilians and abide by its own laws barring these actions.

Recent Congressional actions supporting enforcement of these existing laws include:

- Senators Rand Paul (R-Ky.), Chris Murphy (D-Conn.) and [then Senator] Al Franken (D-Minn.) introduced a joint resolution that disapproves on humanitarian grounds of part of the \$110 billion weapons sale to Saudi Arabia finalized by President Trump (2017).²
- Congressmen Ted Lieu (D-Calif-33) and Ted Yoho (R-Fla.-3) are demanding hearings to verify that Saudi Arabia is not targeting civilians as a condition for the \$110 billion weapons sale to proceed (2017).³
- Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt) and ten Congressmembers demanded that the Secretary of State investigate if Israel and Egypt engaged in extrajudicial killings, torture, massacre of political protestors, and/or disappearances that would constitute violations of the Leahy Law (2016).⁴

Those political actions were prompted in part by the 2012 letter to Congress⁵ by 15 American Protestant and Catholic leaders demanding “an immediate investigation into possible violations by Israel of U.S. [laws] ... that prohibit assistance to any country that engages in a consistent pattern of human rights violations and limits the use of U.S. weapons to ‘internal security’ or ‘legitimate self-defense.’”

LA Jews for Peace encourages vigorous enforcement of the *U.S. Foreign Assistance Act* and the *U.S. Arms Export Control Act*, both amended by the *Leahy Law*. These laws are designed to assure that the United States is not complicit in war crimes that may be committed using American made and supplied weapons.

It is important that these laws are applied to arms sales to Israel, not just Saudi Arabia and Egypt. Israeli violations of Palestinian human rights are egregious and well documented⁶ and include Israeli snipers shooting Palestinian protesters this month at their non-violent March for Return. Enforcing these laws will put the U.S. on the right side of history.

¹ Comment to LA Jews for Peace at info@LAJewsforPeace.org.

² <http://thehill.com/blogs/floor-action/senate/335182-senate-gears-up-for-fight-on-trumps-saudi-arabia-arms-sale>.

³ <http://thehill.com/policy/defense/335193-lawmakers-demand-hearing-on-saudi-arms-sale> and <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=708CaVRc2dM>.

⁴ <https://www.politico.com/f/?id=00000153-c56c-d662-a75b-cfecc6be0000>.

⁵ <https://www.pcusa.org/news/2012/10/5/religious-leaders-ask-congress-condition-israel-mi/>.

⁶ For example, the Goldstone Report, the 2009 United Nations report on the first Gaza conflict, <http://www.ohchr.org/EN/HRBodies/HRC/SpecialSessions/Session9/Pages/FactFindingMission.aspx>.