

# LA Jews for Peace Policy Statement

Aug.29, 2024, Los Angeles, CA

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## Congress Must Act to Stop the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine

It is past time for the United States to stop arming Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and Gaza Strip.

Israel has been ethnic cleansing Palestinians in the Gaza Strip for eleven months as the primary goal of its revenge for Hamas' Oct.7 attack. In parallel, Israel has been conducting almost daily military raids into the northern West Bank. Israel has now significantly expanded those attacks with an Aug.28 pre-dawn coordinated air and ground military incursion into Jenin, Nablus, Toubas, and Tulkarem. This attack, the largest into the West Bank in over 20 years, used U.S. made and provided weapons. It killed at least 10 Palestinians, destroyed homes and infrastructure, and intentionally targeted healthcare workers and hospitals.

The attacks on Palestinians in the West Bank are not just coming from the Israeli military, but also from arming and unleashing settler thugs on Palestinian towns and villages. Settlers steal land and livestock; burn homes, cars, and olive orchards, and terrorize and kill Palestinians. Neither the Israeli army nor police acts to stop these settler attacks; in fact, the Israeli army commonly stands by and watches.

Meanwhile in Gaza, Israel issued 16 evacuation orders in August affecting about 258,000 people in Gaza, over 10% of the population. The most dire was the order for thousands of civilians to evacuate the town of Deir al-Balah (halfway between Gaza City and Khan Yunis) on Aug.25 with only a few hours warning. This evacuation included 200 U.N. workers, effectively stopping a major U.N. vaccination campaign to fight the polio outbreak that is starting to spread in the Gaza Strip.

Military incursion and forced evacuations of an occupied population are violations of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention that mandates that an occupier (Israel) is required to protect and promote the occupied (West Bank and Gaza Strip Palestinians). This raises serious issues for the United States.

The United States is the main supplier of weapons that Israel uses in violation of the 4<sup>th</sup> Geneva Convention. That makes the U.S. complicit in those violations of international law.

The United States is in violation of its own laws, namely the Arms Export Control Act and the Foreign Assistance Act, both expanded by the Leahy amendments. Together these laws are meant to prevent the U.S. from supplying weapons to any country or foreign security force units that "engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights," and limits the use of U.S.-supplied weapons "solely for internal security, for legitimate self-defense."

**LA Jews for Peace** calls on Congress to impose an arms embargo to enforce American law and stop Israel's ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. This duty must fall to Congress because after eleven months of war, it is clear the Biden-Harris Administration will not act to stop Israel's violations of either American or international law.