



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on December 11, 2023

U.S. Authorizes Emergency Arms Sale to Israel

The Biden administration confirmed December 9 that it bypassed congressional authority over military aid to Israel by giving emergency approval for the sale of \$106.5 million worth of tank ammunition needed for Israel's ongoing war efforts against Hamas in Gaza.

The U.S. State Department declared that it had informed Congress the previous day about its emergency arms sale decision, after Secretary of State Antony Blinken contended that "an emergency exists that requires the immediate sale" of tank shells to Israel. Such a move was to safeguard U.S. national security interests, as per claims made by the State Department.



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The approval of such arms sales seldom bypasses congressional oversight and is granted only when the Executive Branch views the necessity of deploying weapons as too pressing to wait for lawmakers to take action. The deal with Israel entails almost 14,000 high-explosive M830 tank rounds, which are capable of destroying tanks and other armored targets.

"The United States is committed to the security of Israel, and it is vital to US national interests to assist Israel to develop and maintain a strong and ready self-defense capability," the State Department stated. "This proposed sale is consistent with those objectives. Israel will use the enhanced capability as a deterrent to regional threats and to strengthen its homeland defense."

Such an emergency approval came as the Biden administration is grappling with obtaining congressional approval for \$106 billion in supplemental security spending, including \$14.3 billion for Israel. Last month, the U.S. House of Representatives passed a bill that would grant \$14.5 billion in aid, but Biden has insisted that funding for Israel and Ukraine be bundled together.

Republican lawmakers have delayed the approval of additional aid to Kyiv after hitherto approving \$113 billion in outlays, highlighting fears that Washington was prolonging the conflict with Russia without a clear victory strategy.

Some Democrats have indicated that any military aid given to Israel should be made contingent on taking action to decrease civilian casualties in Gaza.

Nearly 18,000 Palestinians have been killed, and 1.9 million people have been displaced since the latest hostilities began in October. An Israeli study also found that 61 percent of the people who perished in Israeli airstrikes were [civilians](#). The conflict was triggered when Hamas militants conducted terror attacks on villages in southern Israel on October 7, killing an estimated 1,200 people and taking hundreds of hostages to Gaza.

On December 8, the United States cast the sole dissenting vote against a proposed UN Security Council resolution that would have mandated a humanitarian ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war, amid escalating



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civilian casualties in Gaza.

Thirteen member states [voted](#) in favor of the resolution, which was suggested by the United Arab Emirates (UAE) in New York. The U.K. abstained, leaving Washington alone to block the measure.

“What is the message we are sending Palestinians if we cannot unite behind a call to halt the relentless bombardment of Gaza?” Deputy UAE UN Ambassador Mohamed Abushahab questioned members of the council. “Indeed, what is the message we are sending civilians across the world who may find themselves in similar situations?”

Last week’s vote came after UN Secretary-General António Guterres invoked Article 99, a rarely used provision in the UN charter, to caution the Security Council of an upcoming “humanitarian catastrophe” in Gaza. Guterres claimed that with the war raging on for two months and counting, humanitarian support networks in Gaza face a “severe risk of collapse.”

U.S. officials have objected to a general ceasefire because they claim that such a ceasefire could only help Hamas retain its hold on power in Gaza.

A week-long ceasefire late last month provided for the liberation of 110 Hamas hostages in exchange for 240 Palestinians who had been incarcerated in Israeli jails. The temporary truce also bought time for aid workers to transport more humanitarian supplies into the beleaguered enclave. Israel resumed its military offensive in Gaza on December 1.

The U.S. mission to the UN declared in a [statement](#) that it opposed the ceasefire resolution, as the “rushed” proposal was “divorced from reality” and would “only plant the seeds for the next war.” Washington’s recommendations for revising the resolution were largely ignored, deputy U.S. UN Ambassador Robert Wood said. Among other concerns, Wood added, the document failed to include language denouncing the Hamas attacks.

“Women, children, the elderly — people from a range of nationalities — burned alive, gunned down, subject to obscene sexual violence,” Wood said. “We are very disappointed that for the victims of these heinous acts, the resolution’s authors offered not their condolences, nor condemnation of their murderers. It’s unfathomable.”

Meanwhile, Turkish President Recep Tayyip Erdoğan criticized the UN Security Council (UNSC) on December 9 for becoming a “protector of Israel” owing to U.S. influence, after the United States blocked the resolution calling for an immediate Gaza ceasefire.

“Due to a veto by the US, no decision was reached. It’s essential for the UN Security Council to be reformed,” Erdoğan contended in his address at the World Human Rights Day event in Istanbul.

The Turkish leader posited that the world extends beyond the five permanent members of the UNSC with veto power, namely, China, France, Russia, the U.K., and the United States.

Voicing disappointment in the UNSC, Erdoğan, notwithstanding Türkiye being a NATO ally of the United States, said, “We have lost our hope and expectation from the UN Security Council.”

Erdoğan also claimed that since October 7, when the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) initiated attacks on Gaza, the UNSC, “whose mission is to establish global peace, has turned into a protector of Israel.”

“The Israeli administration, which has the unwavering support of Western countries, is committing murderous atrocities and massacres in Gaza that will make all humans blush.... A fair world is possible, but not with America, because America sides with Israel,” the Turkish president insisted.



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In an [op-ed](#) published by the *Los Angeles Times* on December 9, UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) chief Philippe Lazzarini slammed the IDF for paving the way for the mass expulsion of Palestinians into Egypt and creating conditions that will make it impossible for them to ever return to their destroyed homes in Gaza.

“The United Nations and several member states, including the US, have firmly rejected forcibly displacing Gazans out of the Gaza Strip,” UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) chief Philippe Lazzarini wrote. “But the developments we are witnessing point to attempts to move Palestinians into Egypt, regardless of whether they stay there or are resettled elsewhere.”

Lazzarini lamented that “the sad reality is that Gazans are not safe anywhere: not at home, not in a hospital, not under the UN flag, not in the north, middle, or south.”

The Israel-Hamas war has driven more than 1.8 million Gazans from their homes, the largest forced displacement of Palestinians since 1948, Lazzarini claimed.

An Israeli Defense Ministry spokesman rebuffed Lazzarini’s accusation, saying Israel has never had a plan to push Gazans into Egypt.

Nonetheless, last month, two Israeli lawmakers wrote in a [Wall Street Journal](#) op-ed that they would like to see countries around the world welcome Gazan refugees who opt to relocate.



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