

REASONS TO OPPOSE US AID TO ISRAEL

United States diplomats like to say that when it comes to the conflict between Israel and Palestinians the US plays the role of “an honest broker.” But the US’ massive financial and military support for Israel means that, in fact, the US is taking sides. Israel is the largest recipient of US foreign aid, receiving more than \$3 billion annually—or about \$8 million every day. If a level diplomatic playing field is to be created, the US’ unfair and biased support of Israel must end. Until the US stops lending its weight to Israel, a truly just peace will remain elusive.

Israel Is Illegally Occupying Palestinian Land

After Israel invaded East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza in June of 1967, the United Nations Security Council (including the US) passed Resolution 242, which calls for “withdrawal of Israeli armed forces from territories occupied in the recent conflict” and emphasizes the “inadmissibility of the acquisition of territory by war.”¹ In violation of UNSC 242, Israel’s army has never left and to this day remains an illegal and oppressive presence in someone else’s land.

Just weeks after the invasion, Israel began demolishing Arab homes in illegally annexed East Jerusalem. By the end of June 1967, 4000 families had lost their homes and land.² This action should dispel the myth that Israel’s intentions in 1967 were strictly defensive. Israel uses the self-defense argument to cover up the expansion of its territories, to justify human rights abuses since the occupation began, and to collect massive aid from the US.

Israel Systematically Violates the Human Rights of Palestinians

Over three million Palestinians³ in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza live every day of their life under the domination of a hostile, foreign occupying army. Countless international, Israeli and Palestinian human rights organizations—and even the US government—have published reports citing Israel’s consistent human rights violations as defined by the 4th Geneva Convention, which Israel itself has signed. This Convention applies to Palestinian land occupied during time of war.

According to Amnesty International, Israel has “com-

mitted grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions . . . and consistently uses closures, curfews, and demolitions of homes as a form of collective punishment.”⁴

The Israeli human rights group B’Tselem reports that Israel’s occupation army has “fired at ambulances and prevented medical treatment to the sick and wounded even leaving some of them in the field where they bled to death.”⁵ US aid supports this kind of brutality.

US Aid to Israel Violates the US’s Own Laws

The US Foreign Assistance Act (FAA) and the US Arms Export Control Act (AECA) strictly forbid the government from giving military assistance to any country that violates internationally recognized human rights.⁶ The State Department’s 2001 human rights report states:

“Israeli security units often used excessive force against Palestinian demonstrators including live fire . . . impeded the provision of medical assistance to Palestinian civilians by their strict enforcement of internal closures, which reportedly contributed to at least 32 deaths. Israeli security forces harassed and abused Palestinian pedestrians and drivers who were attempting to pass through the more than 130 Israeli-controlled checkpoints . . .”⁷

Under the AECA, “the President is required to report to Congress promptly upon the receipt of information that a substantial violation of AECA may have occurred.”⁸ The US government is fully aware of the Israeli army’s human rights violations, as the above quote from the State Department shows. The US government has eroded its own credibility as an impartial mediator by continuing to arm Israel without restric-

tion and allowing these weapons to be used against civilian populations in violation of US law.

US Support for Israel's Military Threatens US Security and Global Stability

US funding of Israel's human rights abuses fuels resentment towards the US throughout the world. The US sends massive military aid to Israel then looks the other way. At the same time, the US bombs the Iraqi people and embargoes humanitarian aid in response to the actions of their un-elected dictator. Such inconsistent policies are hypocritical and provoke anti-US sentiment, ultimately jeopardizing the safety of people living in the US. Ending aid to Israel will show the world that the US truly respects human rights. The US can build its own security by gaining the trust and respect of the international community.

US military aid to Israel also destabilizes the political climate in other troubled areas of the world. In 2001, Israel made \$2 billion in arms sales to India, including Israeli missile systems that were developed with US tax dollars.⁹ Tensions are as high as ever between Pakistan and India. Contributing to an arms race between the two nations will only bring South Asia closer to war.

Israeli Settlements Are Illegal and Provocative

One of Israel's most egregious violations of the 4th Geneva Convention is the construction of massive settlements in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. The terms of the Convention couldn't be clearer: "The Occupying Power shall not deport or transfer parts of its own civilian population into the territory it occupies."¹⁰ The Israeli government is essentially colonizing the Occupied Territories.

More than 350,000 illegal settlers have built approximately 150 settlements on confiscated Palestinian land.¹¹ And the number is growing. Since 2001 thirty-four new settlements have been established.¹² In addition, Jewish-only bypass roads that connect settlements to each other and to Israel have carved up Palestine into disconnected Palestinian islands, making establishment of a viable Palestinian state impossible. The army and settlers also confiscate scarce natural resources from the region. "Israeli Jewish settlers are allocated 4.5 times more water, per capita, for agricultural and personal use," than the occupied Palestinians themselves, according to Peace Now.¹³ Is this self-defense or expansionism?

US Aid to Israel Does Not Make Israelis Safer

Billions of US taxpayer dollars are delivered to Israel each year, ostensibly to make Israel secure. With these funds, Israel has built one of the strongest militaries in the world in order to maintain an illegal occupation and expand its borders. This brutal occupation is at the root of the violence against the occupier's own civilian population. No amount of US aid can stop this violence. In fact, supporting the collective punishment and captivity of Palestinians will only lead to more bloodshed for Israelis and Palestinians alike. Security and peace for Israelis depends on Israel taking its troops and settlers back into its own country and out of someone else's land.

Israel Is an Exclusionary State

The Israeli Law of Return allows Jews from all over the world to immigrate to Israel and gain citizenship, but indigenous Palestinians who were forced to flee in 1948 and 1967 are excluded from returning to their homes and towns of origin.¹⁴ Many Palestinian refugees still hold the land deed and even the key to their homes.

Palestinian citizens of Israel, who make up 20 percent of the population, suffer state-sanctioned discrimination. The US State Department reports: "The [Israeli] government made little headway in reducing institutional, legal, and societal discrimination against Israel's Arab citizens, [who] do not share fully the rights provided to, and obligations imposed on, the country's Jewish citizens."¹⁵

For example, according to the Nazareth-based Arab Association for Human Rights, "the National Planning and Building Law (1965) retroactively rezoned the lands on which many Arab villages sit as 'non-residential.' ... The authorities use a combination of house demolitions, land confiscation, denial of basic services, and restrictions on infrastructure development to dislodge residents from these villages."¹⁶

Israel's official policy of discriminating against non-Jewish citizens makes the country a kind of "Jim Crow democracy," and not one the US should be supporting.

For more information about Global Exchange's Palestine Human Rights Campaign call 800-497-1994 or write to palestine@globalexchange.org. Complete citations and sources available at www.globalexchange.org/palestine.