



# Key Considerations Concerning Delivery of U.S. Military Aid to Israel

President Biden's decision to withhold a select number of offensive weapons from Israel, if it launches a "major" attack on Rafah (which the State Department has not determined to have happened) calls for careful and wise responses from the U.S., Israel, and Israel's supporters. Below are several key considerations:

- The U.S. must implement any change in the delivery of weapons in a manner that ensures Israel's continued ability to defend itself from Hamas's stated goal of its destruction, that maintains Israel's military capacity to erode Hamas's military and political power (a shared strategic and political goal of Israel, the U.S., and our allies in the region), and that makes clear that the U.S. will continue to act effectively to deter other major hostile players in the region.
- We deeply appreciate President Biden's tremendous support for Israel and a strong U.S.-Israel relationship. The record levels of military assistance to Israel that the President called for immediately and Congress has finally passed; the continuous, unbroken flow of weapons since October 7 (even as tensions between President Biden and Prime Minister Netanyahu have intensified); the President's visit to Israel in the immediate aftermath of the attacks; his Administration's defense of Israel at the UN; ongoing U.S. leadership in the negotiations around the hostages' release; the extraordinary and lifesaving U.S. coordination of American, British, French and Jordanian air defenses to protect Israel from a blistering and unprecedented Iranian attack of over 300 drones, ballistic, and cruise missiles on April 13<sup>th</sup>; all these and more reflect the President's bedrock commitment to Israel's well-being. We also know that President Biden understands the many ways in which Hamas hides behind civilians and embeds itself within non-military sites such as hospitals and schools.
- The U.S. has the right and obligation to make clear when Israel's actions harm U.S. interests and values. The President has made clear for months now the United States' growing concern with the level of civilian casualties and the humanitarian disaster in Gaza.

He has called for Israel, in accordance with American law, to clarify what steps it is taking to sharply reduce civilian casualties and allow humanitarian aid to reach those in need before attacking Rafah. Israel can avoid any change in U.S. continued support by working with the U.S. to respond to these urgent needs before an all-out assault on one of the most densely populated areas on earth.

- With President Biden's announcement, both the U.S. and Israel must recognize that there's no question that Hamas and others, including Iran and Hezbollah, take comfort in any expression of daylight between the U.S. and Israel. For that reason, it is also essential, not only that the U.S. address our concerns above in how it might implement any change in military resupply, but that Prime Minister Netanyahu ensure that he and his government take heed of the Administration's concerns. We have been pained by the occasions on which leading members of the governing Israeli coalition appear to less than fully appreciate the United States' and this Administration's profound friendship and allyship. Prime Minister Netanyahu must also be held accountable for his repeated public defiance of US efforts that strengthen his base of support in Israel but have eroded and weakened the U.S.-Israel relationship. This has helped to push President Biden and the U.S. administration to use additional levers to align U.S. and Israeli strategies to protect Israel and increase the safety of Gazan civilians, including getting adequate humanitarian aid to them.
- The war has caused untold suffering, death, and destruction. We mourn all those murdered on October 7<sup>th</sup>. We continue to pray for the healing of those who were injured. And we are working for the redemption of those who were kidnapped. We also are deeply pained by the tremendous loss of life, the many wounded, the children orphaned, the families torn apart, the devastation of the civilian infrastructure, and the attendant suffering from displacement and deprivation among hundreds of thousands of innocent civilians in Gaza. But we are clear that Hamas be accorded the responsibility it bears for the violence it perpetrated on October 7<sup>th</sup>, the ongoing detention of more than 130 hostages, and the trauma experienced by innocent Gazans caught in the devastation of war.
- The differences between Israel and the U.S. as to how best to achieve their varied shared goals, exemplified by President Biden's announcement, is a vivid reminder that Israeli and U.S. leaders must continue to further their common interests by working together closely and keeping open clear lines of communication, as has been the case for more than seven decades.

Even in these most challenging of times, ongoing and meaningful partnership will bring us closer to the days of peace of which we dream, and for which we continue to pray.