

White House overlooked Israel's role in Gaza crisis

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The domestic press has largely ignored Amnesty International's call for an arms embargo on Israel, Hamas, and other militant groups, even after the human rights organization's recent report that Israeli forces had used US-supplied weapons, including illegal white phosphorus artillery, against civilians. While several mainstream and student papers, including the Exponent, carried heated debates about the justification for Israel's three-week assault on the Gaza Strip, that this attack was almost entirely subsidized by the US government was largely overlooked.

President Obama has also remained silent on the issue of US military aid to Israel, and has given no indication that he will consider adding any humanitarian qualifications into former president Bush's \$30 billion agreement to provide military aid over the next ten years. US legislators, on the other hand, clarified their position while Israel's carefully planned assault was still underway. The overwhelming majority of the House (Rep. Steve Buyer included) and the entire Senate passed mirror resolutions exclusively blaming Hamas for Israel's need to defend itself with a military invasion and calling on Palestinians to submit peacefully to Israeli occupation. The House's Resolution went on to call on the rest of the world to join Congress in condemning Hamas for killing 3 Israeli civilians and "deliberately embedding its fighters, leaders, and weapons in private homes, schools, mosques, hospitals," which evidently forced the poor Israeli Defense Force to murder over 700 civilians.

The White House has also overlooked Israel's siege on the Gaza Strip, which has held up food, water, and medical supplies at border crossings, and Congress evidently has no interest in opening the blockades until it's members are convinced that the Palestinians have been sufficiently punished for voting Hamas into power in 2006. While both Amnesty International and Human Rights Watch have confirmed that Hamas is illegally launching rockets at Israeli settlements and failing to discourage attacks on civilians, they have also pointed out that Hamas' rockets are obsolete and largely ineffective, while military aid supplied by the US government has allowed attacks by Israel to produce massive numbers of civilian casualties.

The international community has regarded the Palestinian people with marginally less hostility than the US, and the UN has been pursuing a two-state settlement roughly along the internationally recognized border. Even Hamas has declared that it would support such a settlement, in contrast to claims that it is still devoted to Israel's extermination (as opposed to Israel, which seems to be actively exterminating the Palestinian people). Unfortunately, Washington, and therefore Tel Aviv, has opposed such a settlement, contending since 1989 that there can be no second Palestinian state between Israel and Jordan (which evidently became a Palestinian state at some point). Israel's rejection of a two-state settlement and its continued expansion of illegal settlements in the occupied territories would both be impossible without Washington's consent, as demonstrated by Bush's veto of Israel's plans to sell US-made weapons to China in 2007.

President Obama and his administration have an important decision to make: will the US continue expanding Israel's military -- and therefore retaliation by Hamas and other Palestinian organizations -- until the entire region erupts in violence or genocide, or will it stop backing Israel's war on Palestine, encourage Israel to lift the siege on Gaza, and help both parties reach a peaceful settlement? The majority of the public favors the latter option, while policy makers and the media appear committed to the former. Unfortunately, the only thing that Washington's policy of unconditional military support guarantees is more violence and suffering for the Palestinian people.

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