

United States Senate

May 6, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

Dear President Biden,

We are shocked that your administration has reportedly decided to withhold critical ammunition to Israel.¹ You promised your commitment to Israel was ironclad.² Pausing much-needed military support to our closest Middle Eastern ally signals otherwise.

We are deeply concerned that your administration failed to notify Congress about this decision. Just one month ago, Congress passed a national security supplemental to provide military assistance to Israel. In October 2023, you said that the funding package was imperative to “provide the necessary security assistance to Israel [and] support Israeli efforts to secure the release of the hostages.”³ On April 24, you signed the national security supplemental into law and promised that you “will always make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself against Iran and terrorists it supports.”⁴ If these reports are true, then you have once again broken your promise to an American ally.

Since October 7, Israel has faced existential threats from every side. In the Gaza Strip, Iran-backed Hamas terrorists responsible for the carnage of October 7 continue to attack Israel and hold dozens of hostages, including our fellow citizens. Hezbollah forces continue to bomb Northern Israel, forcing the evacuation of 60,000 Israelis. Houthis have also attacked dozens of ships crossing the Red Sea to strangle the Israeli economy. And, of course, Iran, the supporter of all these terrorist groups, launched more than 300 projectiles against Israel last month in an unprecedented escalation by Tehran, not to mention the attacks by Iranian proxies on our own servicemembers in the region.

¹ Barak Ravid, “U.S. Put a Hold on an Ammunition Shipment to Israel,” Axios, May 5, 2024, <https://www.axios.com/2024/05/05/israel-us-ammunition-shipment-hold>.

² “Readout of President Joe Biden’s Call with Prime Minister Netanyahu of Israel,” The White House, April 28, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2024/04/28/readout-of-president-joe-bidens-call-with-prime-minister-netanyahu-of-israel-4/#:~:text=The%20President%20reaffirmed%20his%20ironclad,an%20immediate%20ceasefire%20in%20Gaza.>

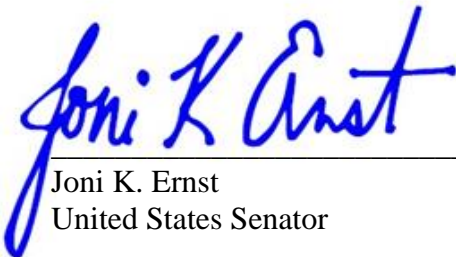
³ “Fact Sheet: White House Calls on Congress to Advance Critical National Security Priorities,” The White House, October 20, 2023, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/statements-releases/2023/10/20/fact-sheet-white-house-calls-on-congress-to-advance-critical-national-security-priorities/#:~:text=Today%2C%20the%20President%20is%20requesting,to%20the%20people%20of%20Israel.>

⁴ “Remarks by President Biden on the Passage of H.R. 815, the National Security Supplemental,” The White House, April 24, 2024, <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/speeches-remarks/2024/04/24/remarks-by-president-biden-on-the-passage-of-h-r-815-the-national-security-supplemental/>.

We must give Israel the arms it needs to fight the Hamas terrorists that continue to hold Americans hostage. We call on your administration to immediately restart the weapons shipments to Israel today as it continues to fight Iran, Hamas, Hezbollah, and other Iran-backed threats and answer the following questions by May 20, 2024:

1. Which ammunition did your administration withhold from Israel?
 - a. Why did your administration decide to withhold this ammunition?
 - b. Did the administration withhold any ammunition that was approved by Congress in the recent national security supplemental?
 - c. Does your administration have any plans to withhold further assistance from Israel?
2. Please explain how your administration's decision to withhold security assistance from Israel is consistent with your April 23 promise to "make sure that Israel has what it needs to defend itself against Iran and terrorists it supports."
3. Why did your administration fail to notify Congress about this decision to withhold assistance to Israel?
 - a. If your administration decides to withhold further assistance to Israel, would you commit to communicating such a decision to Congress beforehand?

Sincerely,



Joni K. Ernst
United States Senator



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United States Senator