

# U.S. Military Aid to Israel—Illegal and Immoral

Can You Think of a Better Way to Spend \$30 Billion over the Next Decade?

## A BRIEF HISTORY

**O**n August 16, 2007, the United States and Israel signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) to increase bilateral military aid to Israel to \$30 billion over the next decade, representing a more than 25% increase over the previous FY2008 appropriation.<sup>1</sup>

Even before this increase in military aid, Israel was already the largest recipient of U.S. assistance. According to Congressional Research Service, since 1949, the United States has provided Israel with more than \$53 billion of military aid—a little more than half of total aid to Israel, which stood at more than \$101 billion as of 2007.<sup>2</sup>

Over the past decade, U.S. military aid to Israel increased yearly while economic aid was phased out, implementing a ten-year understanding negotiated between Congress and the government of former Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu in 1998.<sup>3</sup>

In FY2008—the last year of this ten-year understanding—the United States provided Israel with an estimated \$2.38 billion in military aid while traditional economic aid—known as Economic Support Funds in budgetary language—was reduced to zero (although the United States continued to provide an estimated \$39.7 million to Israel under a different budget category known as Migration and Refugee Assistance).<sup>4</sup>

In his budget request to Congress for FY2009—the first budget year of the new understanding signed in 2007—President George W. Bush requested \$2.55 billion in Foreign Military Financing (FMF) for Israel, a 9% increase over actual military aid given to Israel in FY2007.<sup>5</sup> (FMF is the primary budgetary vehicle through which the United States provides military aid.) Under the terms of the new understanding, annual military aid appropriations to Israel are scheduled to rise to \$3.1 billion by FY2018.<sup>6</sup>

## VIOLATIONS OF U.S. LAWS

**A**ll U.S. aid programs, whether military or economic, have built-in mechanisms to prevent that aid from being used by countries to commit human rights abuses. According to U.S. law, countries that commit human rights abuses with U.S. aid are to be sanctioned and aid is to be cut off.

The Arms Export Control Act (P.L. 80-829) stipulates that countries purchasing or receiving U.S. weapons cannot use them against civilians and must restrict their usage to “internal security” and “legitimate self-defense.”



The US Campaign and many other organizations have documented Israel's repeated uses of U.S. weapons to commit human rights violations against civilians in the Occupied Palestinian Territories and in Lebanon. Indeed, Israel could not maintain its illegal 40-year military occupation and siege of the Palestinian West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip without these weapons.

According to the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (P.L. 87-195), “No assistance may be provided under this part [of the law] to the government of any country which engages in a consistent pattern of gross violations of internationally recognized human rights.” As documented not only by Palestinian, Israeli, and international human rights groups, but by the U.S. government as well, Israel has an atrocious human rights record and therefore should be ineligible for any form of U.S. aid.

## TAKE ACTION

\* Send a postcard, sign a petition, or write a letter to your Members of Congress and the President opposing military aid to Israel.

\* Sign up for an organizing packet to educate and mobilize people in your community on this issue.

\* Organize a meeting of constituents with your Members of Congress to oppose military aid to Israel.

\* Put a flash graphic on your blog or social networking site opposing military aid to Israel.

\* Learn more about U.S. arms laws and transfers of weapons to Israel at the websites of the Federation of American Scientists: [www.fas.org](http://www.fas.org) and the World Policy Institute: [www.worldpolicy.org](http://www.worldpolicy.org)

More information at:  
<http://www.endtheoccupation.org/article.php?list=type&type=208>

## ENDNOTES

<sup>1</sup> “Signing of Memorandum of Understanding between Israel and the United States,” August 16, 2007. Available at: <http://www.mfa.gov.il/MFA/About+the+Ministry/MFA+Spokesman/2007/Signing%20of%20Memorandum%20of%20Understanding%20between%20Israel%20and%20the%20United%20States%2016-Aug-2007>.

<sup>2</sup> Jeremy M. Sharp, Specialist in Middle East Affairs, Congressional Research Service Report, “U.S. Foreign Aid to Israel,” updated January 2, 2008, Table 5. Recent U.S. Aid to Israel, p. 18. Available at: [http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33222\\_20080102.pdf](http://assets.opencrs.com/rpts/RL33222_20080102.pdf).

<sup>3</sup> Serge Schmemmann, “Israelis to Discuss Phasing Out 1.2 Billion U.S. Economic Aid,” *New York Times*, January 27, 1998. Available at: <http://query.nytimes.com/gst/fullpage.html?res=9E07E6D7113BF934A15752C0A96E958260&sec=&spon=&pagewanted=all>.

<sup>4</sup> “Summary and Highlights: International Affairs Function 150, Fiscal Year 2009 Budget Request,” U.S. Department of State. Available at: <http://www.state.gov/documents/organization/100014.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>6</sup> Sharp, *op. cit.*, p. 2.