

Biden's Backing of Israeli War Crimes Carries on a Sordid US Tradition

This is not the first time the U.S. has used disinformation to justify a political ally's targeting of civilians.

As the Israeli military's ground attacks against Gaza intensify and the civilian death toll spirals under the cover of the information blackout effected by air strikes knocking out Gaza's internet and communication systems, the Biden administration is becoming increasingly isolated within the international community for its stubborn backing of Israel's acts of collective punishment against the population of Gaza.

On October 27, the UN General Assembly overwhelmingly voted for a resolution sponsored by Jordan, a U.S. ally, calling for a ceasefire. The United States was one of only 14 countries in the 193-member body to vote against the resolution.

Even conservative pro-Western [Arab governments](#) that have normalized relations with Israel have expressed their anger with Israel for its attacks on Gaza, which have displaced over 1 million people, and with the U.S. for its support of Israel's "ethnic cleansing." A joint statement by [European Union leaders](#) has called for "corridors and pauses" in the U.S.-backed war efforts in order to get badly needed humanitarian aid into Gaza.

The [Catholic Church](#), [the Orthodox Church](#), [the Anglican Church](#), and most [major Protestant denominations](#) have gone on record calling for a ceasefire. The Biden administration, however, has sided with [right-wing evangelicals](#) in supporting a continuation of the Israeli assault.

Following the horrific Hamas-led massacre that left 1,400 Israeli civilians and soldiers dead in early October, Israel has embarked on a retribution campaign that is raining war crimes down on the besieged Gaza Strip. [Amnesty International](#) reports major war crimes by U.S.-backed Israeli forces in Gaza, noting "As Israeli forces continue to intensify their cataclysmic assault on the occupied Gaza Strip, Amnesty International has documented unlawful Israeli attacks, including indiscriminate attacks, which caused mass civilian casualties and must be investigated as war crimes."

While there has been worldwide condemnation of both Israel and Hamas, Washington officials have largely exempted Israel from criticism. In addition to the thousands of civilians killed outright in the bombing, Israel has [cut off](#) all water, food, medical supplies, power and fuel, leading to a collapse of the health system that is also resulting in large-scale fatalities. Continuous bombing has made it difficult for all but a small number of relief supplies to enter via Egypt.

Since its founding long before Hamas seized Gaza, the Palestine Health Ministry has developed a positive reputation among public health officials the world over — including among U.S. government agencies — for its independence and the accuracy of its statistics. Biden, however, echoing President George W. Bush when he denied the staggering death toll from the U.S. invasion of Iraq, is saying he has "[no confidence](#)" in the numbers offered by Palestinian sources, while acknowledging that "innocents have been killed" but "it's the price of waging a war."

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Despite this, the Biden administration made clear to other members of the United Nations Security Council that it would veto any call for a ceasefire. On October 18, Brazil put forward a compromise resolution which, in addition to condemning Hamas terror, simply called for "pauses" in the fighting to allow for humanitarian aid to go to Gaza. The United States vetoed it anyway, casting the only no vote in the 15-member body. The United States has also unsuccessfully tried to push [through a resolution](#) that condemned Hamas and supported Israel's right to "self-defense."

Meanwhile the Biden administration, as the principal international backer of Israel's war on Gaza, is doing its best to cover up for the atrocities. Biden has [cast doubt](#) on the high civilian death toll, at this writing at least 7000 people, despite the State Department [relying on the same sources](#). *Al-Jazeera*, the Qatari-based but editorially independent news bureau, is one of the few that still has reporters on the ground in the Gaza Strip providing evidence of Israeli atrocities, so [Secretary of State Antony Blinken](#) has called on Qatar's government to censor their coverage.

As with [prior conflicts](#), Biden and congressional leaders are trying to absolve Israel of responsibility by claiming Palestinians alone are responsible for Palestinian deaths because Hamas is supposedly using "human shields." However, in their thorough investigations of the previous Israeli wars on Gaza, neither [Human Rights Watch](#), [Amnesty International](#), nor the [United Nations Human Rights Council](#) was able to document a single Palestinian death as a direct result of Hamas using Palestinian civilians as human shields. They found Hamas guilty of a number of other serious war crimes, but not of holding civilians against their will in harm's way. Nor have they found any examples of Hamas using Palestinians as human shields in the current round of fighting.

The civilian death toll from the first 20 days of Israeli bombardment in Gaza is already over half the civilian death toll in Ukraine from 20 months of Russian bombardment. The contrast between the [outrage of the Biden administration](#) toward Russia for its attacks on civilian targets in Ukraine and the Biden administration's support for Israeli attacks on Palestinian civilians is striking.

The crimes of Hamas against civilians in Israel no more justify bombing civilian population centers in Gaza than the crimes of the Azov Battalion against ethnic Russians in the Donbas region justify Russia's bombing of civilian population centers in Ukraine. It's no surprise that onlookers worldwide have pointed out how the differing responses by the Biden administration are correlated to the skin color of the victims.

With polls showing most Americans supporting U.S. military aid to Ukraine while [opposing](#) U.S. military aid to Israel, the Biden administration is insisting that the two countries' aid packages be lumped together, forcing progressive Democrats to risk being labeled as not supporting Ukraine's right to self-defense against the Russian invasion while opposing U.S. facilitation of the ongoing slaughter in Gaza. Biden is insisting that in order to provide arms to one country resisting a foreign invasion and occupation, Congress must approve sending arms to another country invading and occupying.

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Amnesty International and other human rights monitors use the same methodology and reporting methods for documenting violations of international humanitarian law from aerial bombardment of urban areas during the

Israeli attacks on Gaza as it has with Russian bombardment of Ukrainian cities and Syrian bombardments of its own cities. Despite this, supporters of Biden's policies insist that, while Amnesty and other groups are telling the truth about Russian and Syrian atrocities, they cannot be trusted regarding its reports on Israeli atrocities.

There are no more than 30,000 Hamas fighters in Gaza and only a few thousand more from other armed militias. There are over 2 million Palestinians living in the Gaza Strip. It's clear that in backing current Israeli military policy, the Biden administration is facilitating collective punishment on a grand scale.

As if the real Hamas atrocities weren't bad enough, Biden has fabricated some in order to justify U.S. support for Israel's war on Gaza. For example, [Biden claimed](#) on October 11, that he had seen and had possession of "confirmed pictures of terrorists beheading children" only for the [White House to later admit](#) he had not.

This sequence brought to mind previous administrations' disinformation-laced efforts to justify wars, such as the Bush administration's unfounded insistence, echoed by then-Senate Foreign Relations Chairman Joe Biden — that they had incontrovertible proof that Iraq had "weapons of mass destruction."

President Biden and other officials have publicly cautioned the Israeli government to differentiate between Hamas and civilians in its war on Gaza, but they have refused to place such conditions on any of the more than \$10 billion in additional military aid promised to Israel. Israeli leaders know they can simply ignore the administration's pleading with little consequence, just as they have for years ignored the administration's calls on Israel to freeze the expansion of illegal settlements and [stop far right settler militia from killing Palestinians in the occupied West Bank](#).

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In both cases, the U.S. presidents insisted that the country at hand was a democracy defending itself against terrorists, discounted casualty counts from health ministries, and accused Amnesty International and other human rights groups of bias in reporting war crimes and other human rights abuses. In both cases they also insisted that the civilian casualties were actually the fault not of the U.S.-backed government but of the "terrorists," attacked opponents of U.S. policy by accusing them of supporting violent totalitarian ideologies, and blocked the United Nations from any attempt to end the conflict.

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The Biden administration's current rhetoric also harkens back to Reagan insisting that the genocidal Guatemalan dictator General Efraín Ríos Montt was being given a "bum rap" and the claims by Richard Holbrooke — a key figure in the Carter, Clinton and Obama administrations — that the mass starvation in East Timor wasn't the fault of the scorched-earth campaign by Indonesian forces in the occupied island nation's richest agricultural areas, but simply a legacy of Portuguese colonial neglect.

In short, U.S. policy supporting the carnage in the Gaza Strip is not primarily about pressure from the pro-Israel lobby (the more [liberal wing](#) of which is actually pushing the Biden administration to end its opposition to a humanitarian pause in the fighting), but part of a longstanding U.S. foreign policy tradition of downplaying and covering up for war crimes by right-wing allies.

The Biden administration's refusal to act in opposition to the unfolding mass killing in Gaza is certainly not the only area in which the United States is out of step with the vast majority of the international community. Other

arenas in which it fails to back basic human rights measures include its opposition to the International Criminal Court and its refusal to ratify such international treaties as the Kyoto Protocol on climate change, the Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Discrimination against Women, the Convention on the Rights of the Child, the International Convention for the Protection of All Persons from Enforced Disappearance, the Ottawa Treaty banning land mines, the Convention on Cluster Munitions, the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities, and the Optional Protocol to the Convention Against Torture.

Faced with the devastating attacks on civilian targets that the Israeli army is carrying out in Gaza, the Biden administration can't even cite popular pressure within the U.S. as a justification for its hardline position. Indeed, opposition among Democrats to giving Israel a blank check for war crimes is so high [there are strong indications](#) that it could threaten the Democratic Party's election chances in 2024.

The horrors unfolding in the Gaza Strip have made evident that simply replacing a rogue leader like Donald Trump with a supposed institutionalist like Joe Biden hasn't prevented the United States from remaining an international outlier — even on something as fundamental as war crimes.

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[Israel Is Using Disinformation and Deflection as a Foreign Policy Stratagem](#)

Israel is using defamatory attacks against its critics and a strategic deployment of disinformation to shape discourse. By [Daniel Falcone](#) , [Truthout](#)