

U.S. Aid to Israel

A Call to Citizens Concerned with Repression in the West Bank

We have given \$23,240 for each Israeli person

From 1949 through 1997, the U.S. Government has given \$134 billion to Israel (including interest costs). 99% of this has been given since 1967, and it amounts to \$23,240 for each Israeli person. This aid is approximately 1/3 of the U.S. foreign aid budget, and it helps to make Israel one of the richest countries in the world. Israel had a per capita gross domestic product of \$18,440 in 1999, greater than Greece, Portugal or Spain. An article in the Washington Report on Middle East Affairs lays out these shocking details, http://www.wrmea.com/html/us_aid_to_Israel

According to the U.S. Dept. of State, Israel's military budget for 1999 was about 36.4 NIS or \$8.79 billion. http://state.gov/www/global/arms/99_amiex2.html

The U.S. contributes at least \$2.1 billion per year in military aid, or about 24% of Israel's military budget. If the U.S. withdrew only its military aid, it would reduce Israel's overall budget by about 4.5%.

We gave over \$10 billion in 1997

Tom Malthaner has calculated that the U.S. gave Israel \$6.72 billion in 1997 from various Government agencies. Interest forgiveness adds another \$3.122 billion dollars, or a total of over \$10 billion. Using the cash value \$6.72 billion, we find that U.S. aid amounts to about 15% of the total Israeli budget. (See the Washington Report website noted above) There is no getting around the fact that U.S. aid is a mainstay of the Israeli economy and military capability. The U.S. is anything but an honest broker in the region.

Providing Israel with the most advanced U.S. weapons subsidizes the U.S. arms manufacturers and fuels a regional military build-up. It should not be surprising that the arms industry contributes twice as much money per year to lobby Congress as all the U.S. pro-Israel groups combined (see Stephen Zunes' article on the Washington report website).

The point of providing all these statistics is that Israel is dependent on the U.S. Government for a very substantial part of its military and over-all budget. Israel depends on the latest U.S. military technology and on political support in the U.N. and other world bodies. Israel is in fact so dependent that some Israeli supporters have jokingly referred to it as the 51st state.

The money results in massive suffering and death for the Palestinian people.

Recent brutal Israeli attacks on the cities and towns of the West Bank have resulted in massive suffering and death for the Palestinian populations. These are not excused by the brutal violence of the suicide bombers. But the violent actions of the Israelis have been forcefully condemned by governments the world. It is clear that we should not be subsidizing this violence. Even President Bush has had to make public statements condemning military attacks on civilians.

Serious U.S. Government pressure could surely change Israeli Government policies, but such action is unlikely in the current political context without pressure from citizens. It is true that only the U.S. can solve the Middle East conflicts, but not in the way this is portrayed in our mass media. The real power to resolve the conflict lies in Washington, not in Tel Aviv, Jerusalem, or Ramallah. Ending U.S. support to the Israeli Government would get attention very quickly. But it will take a mass movement to change U.S. policy.

Are We Responsible for the Middle East Conflict?

The recent escalation of the Middle East conflict is extremely disturbing to a growing number of people. Many citizens are starting to voice some previously unasked questions. How should we look at U.S. Government aid to Israel? Is the U.S. an honest broker advocating the best interests of both sides and a just peace in the region? Is the Middle East conflict an age-old conflict that can only be solved by outside intervention? When we look at U.S. Government funding of the Israeli Government we see that the "outside intervention" is already in place. There has been massive U.S. support for every Israeli Government since the 1967 war. The financial, military and political support of the U.S. has shielded the Israeli Government from seriously having to address the social, economic, and political aspiration of the Palestinian people. Continuous Israeli repression, confiscation of Palestinian lands for new settlements, and daily humiliation from Israeli soldiers are the root causes of the increasing scourge of suicide bombers.