



Written by [Angeline Tan](#) on November 4, 2023

## House Approves \$14.3 Billion in Military Aid for Israel

On November 2, the U.S. House of Representatives authorized a \$14.3 billion military-aid package for Israel, a move widely seen as a robust response to Israel's war with Hamas but also a litmus test for new Speaker Mike Johnson (R-La.), as the Republican majority attempts to get back to business after a month of chaos since deposing Speaker Kevin McCarthy (R-Calif.).

In a break from norms, Johnson's package mandated that such emergency aid be countervailed with reductions in government spending elsewhere. The bill was approved 226-196, with 12 Democrats joining most Republicans on a primarily party-line vote.



AP Images  
Mike Johnson

Observers have stated that such a move reflects the new House GOP's conservative leadership, but it also resulted in an unsurprising bipartisan vote dividing Democrats and Republicans.

Johnson declared that the Republican package would supply Israel with the aid required for self-defense, liberating hostages held by Hamas, and extirpating the terrorist group, achieving "all of this while we also work to ensure responsible spending and reduce the size of the federal government."

In turn, Democrats retorted that Johnson's measures would only postpone help for Israel. For instance, Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer (N.Y.) has cautioned that the "stunningly unserious" bill would not pass in the Senate.

This first considerable legislative attempt in Congress to back Israel did not meet Biden's request for almost \$106 billion that would also support Ukraine amid the Russo-Ukrainian conflict, together with American attempts to deal with a rising China and tackle security at the border with Mexico.

Johnson has indicated that he would address the topic of Ukraine aid and U.S. border security, opting to tackle Biden's requests separately as GOP lawmakers increasingly object to aiding Kyiv.

On November 1, Biden urged for a pause in the Israeli-Hamas war to enable relief efforts to take place.

Although the amount for Israel in the House bill was similar to what Biden had asked for, the White House stated that the Republican plan's supposed exclusion of humanitarian aid for Gaza was a "grave mistake" as the conflict escalates.

The White House's veto warning claimed Johnson's approach "fails to meet the urgency of the moment" and would set a dangerous precedent by requiring emergency funds to come from cuts elsewhere.

"This bill would break with the normal, bipartisan approach to providing emergency national security assistance," the White House wrote in its statement of administration policy on the legislation.

Moreover, the White House warned the GOP stance "would have devastating implications for our safety and alliances in the years ahead."



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On October 31, the White House's budget office declared that Biden would decline to sign a Republican-backed military aid package for Israel if it did not entail billions in funding for Ukraine.

The Office of Management and Budget published a statement analyzing the Republican proposal, claiming it "inserts partisanship into support for Israel" and does not set aside resources for Kyiv in its conflict with Moscow.

"Congress has consistently worked in a bipartisan manner to provide security assistance to Israel, and this bill threatens to unnecessarily undermine that longstanding approach," [the office said](#), elaborating that "bifurcating Israel security assistance from the other priorities in the national security supplemental will have global consequences."

It was unclear before voting on November 2 as to the number of Democrats who would back Republicans in the aforementioned bill. Previously, the White House had been directly urging lawmakers, especially Jewish Democrats, to dismiss the bill.

White House chief of staff Jeff Zients, counselor to the president Steve Ricchetti, and other senior White House staff have been reaching out to House Democrats, said an unnamed person familiar with the proceedings who spoke on condition of anonymity.

However, the vote proved challenging for some lawmakers, especially Democrats who wanted to back Israel.

Representative Brad Schneider (D-Ill.), who voted against the package, said, "It was one of the hardest things I've had to do."

To finance the bill, House Republicans have included provisions that would cut billions of dollars in funding from the IRS that Democrats authorized last year and Biden signed into law as a supposed method to go after tax cheats.

Champions of the aforesaid military-aid package said that it would back Israel's Iron Dome missile-defense system, obtain advanced weaponry and other military needs, and assist in protecting and evacuating U.S. citizens. The Congressional Budget Office pegged the overall package at around \$14.3 billion.

While most Republicans vocally back additional aid to Israel amid its attempt to eradicate Hamas in Gaza, support for the Kyiv regime has become a matter of dispute within the party. During recent negotiations to forestall a government shutdown, the White House failed to obtain billions in aid requested for Ukraine owing to GOP objections.

Former House Speaker Kevin McCarthy was ousted from his position due to the controversy, after some Republicans lambasted him for trying to appease Democrats on stop-gap spending legislation.

While lawmakers passed a temporary-funding bill to prevent a government shutdown earlier this month, they chose to exclude Ukraine aid from the measure completely, postponing the issue for a more complete spending package.

Pushing back on Republican complaints, Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin has argued that Ukraine would face defeat by Russia without American largesse, maintaining Washington must not "pull the rug out from under them now."

Notwithstanding some \$50 billion in direct U.S. military aid since February 2022, Ukrainian President Volodymyr Zelensky purportedly feels "betrayed" by Kyiv's Western supporters as arms shipments have



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slowed down, *Time* magazine recently reported, citing his aides. “They have left him without the means to win the war, only the means to survive it,” the publication indicated, quoting a member of Zelensky’s team.

Meanwhile, the Israeli Foreign Ministry declared on November 3 that countries that have not backed Israel’s response to the atrocities committed by Hamas on October 7 were on the side of the terrorist group in the conflict, implying that no neutrality regarding the conflict is possible.

Speaking at a virtual media briefing, spokesman Lior Hayat described Israel’s plan to exterminate Hamas as an existential goal. The group’s leadership, Hayat claimed, was planning “another October 7 massacre, and another one after that, and another one after that.”

Hayat alleged that Israel had obtained “unprecedented international support” after the October 7 attacks, as “no one could see those atrocities and not understand what we are dealing with.”

“I want to send a very clear message to the international community. If you do not condemn Hamas, if you do not [support] Israel’s right to self-defense, you are supporting Hamas.”

Although the United States has promised its unwavering support for Israel’s actions, many countries have blasted Israel’s disproportionate reaction. Following Gaza’s blockade and deprivation of critical supplies and an intense Israeli bombardment, Gaza is reportedly facing a humanitarian crisis.

Recently, Bolivia severed diplomatic relations with Israel to protest against its military tactics in Gaza. Colombia and Chile have recalled their ambassadors from Israel — a move that Israel claimed aligned them with Iran in “supporting terrorism.”

Furthermore, Israel has slammed Iran, its longtime regional nemesis, for backing Hamas.

The binary approach that Hayat described above is similar to the stance the Kyiv regime took regarding its own conflict with Russia.

Addressing Israeli MPs last year in an attempt to lobby for the delivery of advanced weapons, Zelensky claimed that Israel can be “a mediator between nations, but not between good and evil.”

Since February 2022, the United States has been trying to convince non-aligned countries to join the Ukrainian side and combat Russia. Nonetheless, U.S. efforts have been undermined by Washington’s unconditional support for Israel despite mass civilian killings in Gaza, prompting some countries to single the country out for hypocrisy.



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