



Written by [Raven Clabough](#) on August 18, 2011

Leahy Cites Human Rights Violations in Bill Cutting Aid to Israel

Senator Patrick Leahy (D-Vt., left) has declared that the United States should cut off aid to Israel on the grounds of “human rights violations.” As head of the Senate Appropriations Subcommittee on foreign operations, Leahy is promoting a bill that would suspend U.S. assistance to three units in the Israeli Defense Forces, asserting that they are involved in human rights abuses in Judea, Samaria, and Gaza.



According to *The Blaze*, “Leahy’s legislation would seek to withhold assistance from the Israeli Navy’s Shayetet 13 unit, the undercover Duvdevan unit and the Israeli Air Force’s Shaldag unit.”

Leahy was the key sponsor of a 1997 bill that prohibits the United States from giving aid or military assistance to any foreign military suspected of human rights abuses or war crimes and now wants the new clause pertaining to the IDF to become part of the U.S. foreign assistance legislation for 2012.

Israel’s daily newspaper *Haaretz* [reports](#):

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Leahy says these units are responsible for harming innocent Palestinian civilians and that no system of investigation is in place to ensure that their members are not committing human rights violations. According to Leahy’s proposal, U.S. military assistance to Israel would be subject to the same restrictions that apply to countries such as Egypt, Pakistan and Jordan.

Leahy began to push the bill recently after reportedly being approached by pro-Palestinian constituents in his home state of Vermont.

Following that, a pro-Palestinian group protested in front of Leahy’s office demanding that he repudiate Shayetet 13 for its role in killing nine Turkish activists onboard the “Freedom Flotilla” headed toward Gaza. It mattered little to the Palestinian group that the flotilla was loaded with weapons to be smuggled into Gaza and to be used against Israeli Defense Force officers once they were onboard the ship performing their routine search.

The Blaze writes, “It also seems to be left out of Leahy’s narrative that the nine pro-Palestinian activists killed were far from peace-keepers, provoking Israeli officers by ambushing them once they boarded the ship.”

Leahy’s record regarding Israel has been complicated. Though a good friend of former Israeli Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin, he has been critical of Israel in recent years, particularly following [Operation Cast Lead](#) in 2008 — wherein Israel responded to eight years of missile attacks by launching a military operation against Hamas in Gaza. According to the Israeli Ministry on Foreign Affairs, the operation



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had two objectives: first, to “stop the bombardment of Israeli civilians by destroying Hamas’ mortar and rocket launching apparatus and infrastructure,” and second, to “reduce the ability of Hamas and other terrorist groups in ... Gaza” to launch future attacks against Israeli civilians. Still, Leahy harshly denounced this endeavor, even though he has signed congressional resolutions defending Israel’s right to self-defense.

The Israeli embassy in Washington worked diligently, but without success, to persuade Leahy to back down from his initiative. Michael Oren, Israeli’s Ambassador to the United States, then asked Israel’s Defense Minister Ehud Barak, a close friend of Leahy’s, to meet with the Senator and convince him to rethink his legislation.

Though Barak has attempted to discourage his efforts, Leahy remains adamant. During a meeting with the Senator, Barak observed, “The difference between Israel and terror groups or other countries in the Middle East is that we give an accounting and there is monitoring.” Barak has also defended the IDF, asserting that they must adhere to a strict judiciary with greater powers than those assigned to the judiciary for the U.S. military.

“If a Palestinian is injured, he can approach the High Court of Justice,” Barak explained. “The investigations undergo judicial review that is independent of commanders. There are dozens of hearings every year that are based on Palestinians’ complaints against soldiers. They reach the highest and most independent authorities.”

While Leahy reportedly “understood” Barak’s message, according to a senior Israeli official, it is unclear whether he will withdraw his legislation. Barak has indicated that he will continue to hold meetings with Leahy in an attempt to convince him to do so.



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