

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

March 11, 2024

The Honorable Joseph R. Biden, Jr.
President of the United States
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Avenue NW
Washington, DC 20500

President Biden,

The severe humanitarian catastrophe unfolding in Gaza is nearly unprecedented in modern history.

As Vice President Harris said on March 3rd, “We have seen reports of families eating leaves or animal feed, women giving birth to malnourished babies with little or no medical care, and children dying from malnutrition and dehydration.”

Your Administration has repeatedly stated, and the United Nations and numerous aid organizations have confirmed, that Israel’s restrictions on humanitarian access, both at the border and within Gaza, are one of the primary causes of this humanitarian catastrophe.

The Netanyahu government’s interference with humanitarian operations has prevented U.S.-financed aid from reaching its intended recipients in a safe and timely manner.

In recent weeks, humanitarian access has seriously deteriorated. That reality was underscored by your decision last week, which we support, to begin air dropping supplies to desperate civilians in north Gaza.

The Netanyahu government’s interference in U.S. humanitarian operations violates the Humanitarian Aid Corridor Act — Section 620I of the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 (22 USC 2378-1). The law is clear: “No assistance shall be furnished under this chapter or the Arms Export Control Act to any country when it is made known to the President that the government of such country prohibits or otherwise restricts, directly or indirectly, the transport or delivery of United States humanitarian assistance.”

According to public reporting and your own statements, the Netanyahu government is in violation of this law. Given this reality, we urge you to make it clear to the Netanyahu government that failure to immediately and dramatically expand humanitarian access and facilitate safe aid deliveries throughout Gaza will lead to serious consequences, as specified under existing U.S. law.

People are starving. As you have said, “We’re going to insist that Israel facilitate more trucks and more routes to get more and more people the help they need. No excuses. Because the truth is, aid flowing to Gaza is nowhere nearly enough.”

The United States should not provide military assistance to any country that interferes with U.S. humanitarian assistance. We note that the language of the statute does not preclude U.S. assistance for missile defense, such as the Iron Dome, or other defensive systems provided to Israel pursuant to the provisions of the National Defense Authorization Act.

Federal law is clear, and, given the urgency of the crisis in Gaza, and the repeated refusal of Prime Minister Netanyahu to address U.S. concerns on this issue, immediate action is necessary to secure a change in policy by his government.

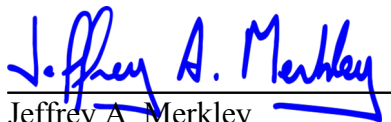
Sincerely,



Bernard Sanders
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator



Jeffrey A. Merkley
United States Senator



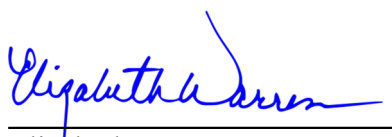
Mazie K. Hirono
United States Senator



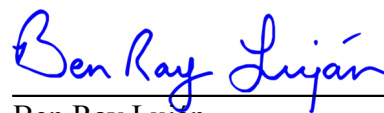
Peter Welch
United States Senator



Tina Smith
United States Senator



Elizabeth Warren
United States Senator



Ben Ray Lujan
United States Senator