

December 5, 2023

Dear Colleague,

Let me say a few words to express my concerns about the \$110.5 billion emergency foreign aid supplemental bill that we will soon be considering. There are pieces of this bill I strongly support, but in its present form I do not think it serves the best interests of the American people.

First, it is imperative that we support Ukraine's valiant effort to defend itself against Putin's invasion. If Ukraine falls, it will be a signal to Putin that he can continue to expand his authoritarian aggression against democratic nations.

Second, I am deeply concerned that this legislation has no investments to address the emergency needs of working families in the United States – 60 percent of whom are living paycheck to paycheck. Let's be clear: it is not only foreign countries that face emergencies. We face enormous crises in this country right now in terms of child care, primary health care, housing, and much more. The American people want action on these vitally important issues.

Third, Congress will likely soon pass a \$900 billion defense bill. Yet this additional supplemental package includes tens of billions that should be covered as part of the base defense budget and handled through normal appropriations, not allocated as "emergency" spending. These savings should be dedicated to addressing some of the enormous domestic crises we face.

Fourth, and most importantly:

At a time when some 16,000 Palestinians have been killed in the last two months, two thirds of whom are women and children, and more than 40,000 have been injured.

At a time when some 1.9 million people have been displaced from their homes and are struggling every day to get the food, water, medical supplies, and fuel they need to survive.

At a time when almost half the housing units in Gaza have been damaged or destroyed and when many schools and medical facilities have been wrecked.

At a time when over 260 people have been killed by Israeli security forces and settlers in the West Bank since October 7<sup>th</sup>, and more than a thousand Palestinians have been driven off their land there.

No, I do not think we should be appropriating \$10.1 billion for the right-wing, extremist Netanyahu government to continue its current military strategy. What the Netanyahu government is doing is immoral, it is in violation of international law, and the United States should not be complicit in those actions.

We are all clear that Hamas, a corrupt terrorist organization, began this war with their barbaric attack against Israel on October 7. Given that reality, Israel has an absolute right to defend itself. It does not, however, have the right to wage all-out war against innocent men, women, and children who had nothing to do with the Hamas attack.

Therefore, I believe it is appropriate to support defensive systems that will protect Israeli civilians against incoming missile and rocket attacks, but I believe that it would be absolutely irresponsible to provide an additional \$10.1 billion in unconditional military aid that will allow the Netanyahu government to continue its current inhumane military approach.

Israel's indiscriminate approach is deeply offensive to most Americans, is in violation of U.S. and international law, and undermines the prospects for lasting peace and security.

Israel must dramatically change its approach to minimize civilian harm and lay out a wider political process that can secure lasting peace. That must include: a guarantee that displaced Palestinians will have the absolute right to return to their

homes as Gaza rebuilds; no long-term occupation or blockade of Gaza; an end to the killings of Palestinians in the West Bank and a freeze on new settlements there; and a commitment to broad peace talks to advance a new two-state solution in the wake of this war.

The Biden administration has, appropriately, been trying to get the Israelis to be more targeted in their approach, but there is little evidence that it has succeeded. Just yesterday airstrikes hit two UN schools housing displaced people, and another school was bombed today. More than 900 people have been killed since Friday, when the week-long humanitarian pause ended. Israeli evacuation orders are delivered with little notice to people with no electricity and limited communications service, most of whom have already been displaced and lack basic necessities.

Despite pleadings from the Biden administration, the UN and humanitarian groups, and leaders throughout the world, the Netanyahu government has continued its reckless and dangerous military policies. We must not provide Netanyahu and his right-wing government a \$10 billion blank check to continue on this course.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bernie Sanders". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sen. Bernie Sanders (I-VT)