

J Street Policy Position: US Security Assistance to Israel

J Street believes that US security assistance to Israel plays a critical role in maintaining Israel's security against serious external threats, and helps to advance US national interests. Throughout our history we have advocated for robust security assistance packages, including the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) negotiated between the Israeli government and the Obama administration, as well as lobbied in support of legislation to authorize and appropriate all of the aid pledged. **We believe that Israel should continue to receive from the United States the full amount of security assistance outlined in the MOU: \$3.8 billion per year for the duration of the agreement.**

At the same time, we believe that US security aid must be used only to address to Israel's genuine defense needs, and not to help implement or sustain illegal, unilateral actions which undermine Israel's security, trample on Palestinian rights and contravene longstanding US interests and values. **American taxpayers must not foot the bill for unilateral annexation in the West Bank.**

Annexation crosses a major red line of international law and goes against decades of bipartisan US policy. Much of Israel's retired security establishment has made clear that annexation and efforts to perpetuate permanent occupation are harmful to Israel's genuine interests, exacerbating conflict and instability. It must be met with meaningful consequences -- including a thorough review and update of how US security assistance to Israel is provided and used. **Congress and the next administration must take steps to ensure that US security aid is not used to implement or maintain annexation, the expansion of settlements, the demolition of Palestinian homes or other moves that entrench occupation.**

Restricting US aid to use only for specific purposes is responsible, standard practice. Supporting such use restrictions is very different than advocating for security assistance to be "cut" (i.e., ended or reduced outright) or "conditioned" (i.e., withheld until certain conditions are met). US security aid to other recipient countries is subject to much more stringent accounting and approval measures. In the interest of transparency and accountability, it's appropriate to stop applying a double standard and ensure Congress and American taxpayers have due visibility into how US aid is used by Israel as well.

Though we won't support or agree on all policy or legislative proposals, J Street is encouraged by the vibrant discussion emerging on the most effective use of US security assistance. We believe it is important to engage in these debates -- not shut them down. As the Israeli government pursues increasingly destructive actions with the support of the Trump administration, it's vital to consider how the US-Israel relationship should evolve to actually promote the genuine shared interests of both countries -- and to avoid enabling the harmful agenda of the Israeli settlement movement and its allies. We will continue to support nuanced, effective and progressive positions which we believe can be implemented and can achieve broad popular support from the American Jewish community and the American people.