

United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

April 7, 2025

The Honorable Pam Bondi
Attorney General
Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20451

The Honorable Tulsi Gabbard
Director
Office of the Director of
National Intelligence
Washington, D.C. 20511

The Honorable Marco Rubio
Secretary
Department of State
2201 C Street NW
Washington, D.C. 20451

Dear Attorney General Bondi, Director Gabbard, and Secretary Rubio,

We write to draw your attention to two concerning reports. According to a March 20 report from Israeli newspaper *Ynet*, Prime Minister Netanyahu, in response a question concerning remaining legitimate targets to strike in Gaza, said “I don’t care about the targets” and ordered military officials to “destroy the homes, bomb everything in Gaza.”¹ Just last week, Israeli Defense Minister Israel Katz said that renewed offensive military operations aim to increase pressure “on the population in Gaza.”

As you know, the destruction of civilian homes without military necessity is a war crime under United States criminal law² and international law,³ while U.S. law additionally outlaws the use of violence to intimidate or coerce civilians. Experts have widely noted that Israel’s bombing campaign in Gaza—the bloodiest and most destructive air campaign in modern history by some measures—stands out for its wide-area destruction and targeting of civilian infrastructure.⁴ This new information raises the question of whether U.S. officials risk liability for aiding and abetting war crimes, particularly in light of the State Department bypassing Congress and invoking an emergency to send more than \$8 billion in arms to Israel, including 2,000-pound bombs.⁵ Accordingly, we request a briefing by April 30, 2025, on the following questions:

1. What additional intelligence or diplomatic information does the U.S. government have regarding PM Netanyahu’s and senior Israeli officials’ ordering the destruction of civilian infrastructure for punitive purposes; to intimidate civilians; to coerce civilians to move out of certain zones or to take certain actions; or to affect the conduct of *de facto* authorities by mass destruction?
2. Israeli forces have destroyed more than 200,000 buildings in pursuit of a force that was estimated by their government at 10,000 to 30,000 fighters, raising questions about target

¹ YNET, “The Wars of Herzi Halevi,” 20 March 2025, <https://www.ynet.co.il/yedioth/article/yokra14303894>.

² 18 U.S.C. § 2441.

³ U.S. Congressional Research Service, *The First Prosecution Under the WAR Crimes Act: Overview and International Legal Context*, U.S. CONGRESSIONAL RESEARCH SERVICE (December 22, 2023) <https://crsreports.congress.gov/product/pdf/LSB/LSB11091#:~:text=In%20the%20Fourth%20Geneva%20Convention,Convention%20party%20to%20stand%20trial>.

⁴ Julia Frankel, *Israel’s military campaign in Gaza seen as among the most destructive in recent history, expert say*, AP News (January 11, 2024), <https://apnews.com/article/israel-gaza-bombs-destruction-death-toll-scope-419488c511f83c85baea22458472a796>.

⁵ Edward Wong, *Rubio Bypasses Congress to Send Israel \$4 Billion in Arms*, The New York Times (March 2, 2025), <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/03/02/us/politics/rubio-arms-israel.html>.

distinction in a densely populated area. For how many of these over 200,000 destroyed homes and buildings have U.S. officials requested from the Israeli government the underlying intelligence justification for pre-planned airstrikes, given the licensing authority of U.S. officials to “verify credible reports” that U.S.-origin equipment and munitions have been used for unauthorized purposes?⁶

3. As you know, the vast majority of the more than 50,000 Palestinian deaths in the last year and a half have been civilian men, women, and children. What calculations has the U.S. government made of the tolerance by Israeli forces of expected harm against civilians in targeting low-level enemy combatants that are not actively engaged in combat activities?

Finally, we are deeply concerned by reports this weekend of an attempted coverup of the killing of 15 Palestinian first aid responders in marked ambulances—that were bulldozed into a mass grave. Israeli officials claimed to have struck Hamas militants in unlit vehicles, but video evidence on victims’ phones unearthed at the site indicates that those killed were uniformed first responders in marked and well-lit ambulances with emergency signals activated.⁷⁸ The International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies noted that the incident “represents the single most deadly attack on Red Cross Red Crescent workers anywhere in the world since 2017.”⁹ We urge you to insist that PM Netanyahu promptly inform the Administration and Congress of his plan to hold accountable the individuals responsible for this attack.

Sincerely,



Peter Welch
United States Senator



Chris Van Hollen
United States Senator

⁶ 22 U.S.C. § 2753

⁷ Lederer, Shurafa, and Keath, *Israel walks back its account of the killing of 15 medics in Gaza after video seems to contradict it*, AP News (April 6, 2025), <https://apnews.com/article/mideast-wars-medics-ambulances-killed-rafah-069ae07c011250d8a5cef7bdfc26f9df>.

⁸ Fassihi and Koettl, *Video Shows Aid Workers Killed in Gaza Under Gunfire Barrage, With Ambulance Lights On*, New York Times (April 4, 2025) <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/04/04/world/middleeast/gaza-israel-aid-workers-deaths-video.html>.

⁹ International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies, *Press Release: IFRC condemns the killing of eight Palestine Red Crescent medics in Gaza* (March 30, 2025), <https://www.ifrc.org/press-release/ifrc-condemns-killing-eight-palestine-red-crescent-medics-gaza>.