

# Active-Duty US Service Members Issue Appeal to Congress to Stop Funding Genocide

As Israel continues its genocide against the Palestinians, the number of US conscientious objectors is increasing.

By [Prof. Marjorie Cohn](#)

Global Research, June 17, 2024

[Truthout](#) 13 June 2024

Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

In-depth Report: [PALESTINE](#)

All Global Research articles can be read in 51 languages by activating the Translate Website button below the author's name (only available in desktop version).

To receive Global Research's Daily Newsletter (selected articles), [click here](#).

Click the share button above to email/forward this article to your friends and colleagues. Follow us on [Instagram](#) and [Twitter](#) and subscribe to our [Telegram Channel](#). Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

[Give Truth a Chance. Secure Your Access to Unchained News, Donate to Global Research.](#)

\*\*\*

*On June 4, a coalition of active-duty service members, veterans and G.I. rights groups launched a campaign called [Appeal for Redress V2](#) to encourage military personnel to tell Congress to stop funding genocide in Gaza. Israel's genocidal operation, now in its ninth month, has killed more than 37,000 Palestinians and wounded nearly 85,000.*

The campaign is sponsored by Veterans For Peace (VFP), the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild, About Face: Veterans Against the War and the Center on Conscience & War. It is modeled after the 2006 [Appeal for Redress](#) issued during the occupation of Iraq. During that campaign, almost 3,000 active-duty, Reserve and Guard personnel sent protected communications to their members of Congress urging an end to the wars and occupations in Iraq and Afghanistan.

[Appeal for Redress V2](#) was formulated to help G.I.s directly tell their representatives that they oppose U.S. support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

"We will not stand by silently while genocide unfolds," Senior Airman Juan Bettancourt, an active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force, stated at a June 4 [press conference](#) announcing the campaign. "We refuse to be complicit" in the "unspeakable carnage," said Bettancourt, who is seeking separation from the U.S. military as a conscientious objector.

Kathleen Gilberd, executive director of the Military Law Task Force of the National Lawyers Guild and my coauthor for [Rules of Disengagement: The Politics and Honor of Military Dissent](#), told *Truthout* there has been an increase in the number of applications for

conscientious objection (CO) and other types of honorable discharge from the military.

“Many military personnel have serious objections to the U.S. support for Israel’s genocide against the Palestinians,” Gilberd said.

According to a [June 3 statement](#) from Bill Galvin, counseling director at the Center on Conscience and War,

“Almost all of [the CO applicants] cite the carnage in Gaza as something that their conscience would not allow them to ignore. Some have expressed feeling complicit in the violence.”

Gilberd noted the significance of these protests, saying:

“As in the Vietnam War, Iraq War and Afghanistan War, G.I. resistance is a powerful force for peace. The National Lawyers Guild’s Military Law Task Force and our allies stand in support of these military dissenters and resisters.”

Senior Airman Larry Hebert, who recently conducted a hunger strike in front of the White House in solidarity with the people of Gaza, noted at the press conference that,

“Genocide didn’t start on October 7.” He added: “It’s been going on for 76 years. It’s time for it to come to an end.”

Hebert was referring to the 1947-48 Nakba, when 750,000 Palestinians were ethnically cleansed from their land in the process of creating the state of Israel. Hebert said the groups sponsoring the Appeal for Redress are calling for a ceasefire, an end to Israel’s occupation of Palestinian territory, and protection of the human rights of Palestinians and their right to self-determination.

“I have been taught that honor and integrity are pivotal to being a soldier,” Army Sergeant Johnson said in the June 3 press release. “It hurts me to my core that the same country that instilled these values in me would proudly support a genocide.” He added, “It is our duty as service members to uphold Geneva Conventions and international law. That is why I am pleading for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and for humanitarian aid to be distributed throughout the entire Gaza Strip.”

Will Hopkins, former executive director of Veterans For Peace, said at the press conference it was “absolutely unconscionable” that U.S. money has been used to kill more than 14,000 children in Gaza.

“The Appeal for Redress, initiated by military personnel, provides an important, protected way for service members to tell their members of Congress that they oppose the U.S.’s funding and support of Israel’s genocide in Gaza,” Gilberd told *Truthout*. “It is literally the tip of an iceberg of military dissent about the war and the U.S.’s role.” She cited the significance of individual, small, silent protests — in addition to bold and public acts of refusal.

Indeed, some of the speakers at the press conference honored the memory of Aaron Bushnell, an active-duty member of the U.S. Air Force who set himself on fire on February 25 outside the Israeli Embassy in Washington, D.C. to protest Israel’s genocide and U.S.

complicity in it. He livestreamed the act, stating,

“I will no longer be complicit in genocide” before he lit himself on fire, repeatedly yelling “Free Palestine!” as the flames engulfed him.

Major Harrison Mann, a Jewish officer who worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency, [recently resigned](#) from the U.S. Army over what he called the United States’ “nearly unqualified support for the government of Israel,” which he says has “enabled and empowered the killing and starvation of tens of thousands of innocent Palestinians.”

Mann went public with his resignation in May after the State Department [issued a report](#) concluding it was “reasonable to assess” that Israel had used U.S. weapons in ways “inconsistent” with international law. Shortly after that report was published, the Biden administration decided to send Israel \$1 billion more in weapons and ammunition.

## The Appeal for Redress

“We know many young people join the military out of necessity to get their needs met. But they are not obligated to contribute to genocide and unjust, unlawful wars that go against their conscience,” said Shiloh Emelein, U.S. Marine Corps veteran and operations director of About Face: Veterans Against the War, in the Appeal’s June 3 [press release](#). “You do have rights, you do have options to object, and there’s a large community of post-9/11 veterans ready to welcome you.”

The Appeal for Redress employs the language of the First Amendment to the U.S. Constitution, which says,

“Congress shall make no law respecting an establishment of religion, or prohibiting the free exercise thereof; or abridging the freedom of speech, or of the press; or the right of the people peaceably to assemble, and to petition the government for a *redress* of grievances.” (emphasis added).

“Though their rights are somewhat limited by military law, service members can still speak out about their beliefs and protest the travesty of this war,” Gilberd said. [Department of Defense Instruction 1325.06](#) protects the First Amendment rights to free speech and protests.

Moreover, a federal statute, [10 U.S. Code § 1034](#), says,

“No person may restrict a member of the armed forces in communicating with a Member of Congress or an [Inspector General](#).”

Bill Galvin said at the press conference that military personnel have the right to be politically engaged as long as they’re off duty, off base and out of uniform and make clear they’re not speaking on behalf of the military. They can’t show disrespect to the chain of command, including the commander-in-chief.

The Appeal for Redress [warns](#) service members that they could face illegal retaliation by their command; the letter could be used against them in a court-martial for civil disobedience; and they could be punished if they reveal classified information without permission, make threats, use “contemptuous words” about chain of command (including the president) or make “disloyal” statements.

This courageous effort by service members and veterans follows in a long tradition of dissent in the U.S. military, from Vietnam to Iraq to Afghanistan. The G.I. movement during the Vietnam War was integral to ending that war.

## U.S. Provision of Weapons to Israel Violates Several U.S. Statutes

These active-duty service members oppose U.S. funding of Israel's genocide both because it's immoral and because U.S. government employees are violating several federal statutes when weapons are shipped to Israel.

In a February 11 [letter](#) to the U.S. State Department, Veterans For Peace urgently demanded that the State Department "immediately suspend ongoing shipments of military weapons and munitions" from the U.S. to Israel. VFP also demanded "that the consideration of approvals of prospective shipments be terminated immediately."

The VFP letter cited violations of the Foreign Assistance Act, Arms Export Control Act, Leahy Laws, Conventional Arms Transfer Policy, U.S. War Crimes Act and the Genocide Convention Implementation Act. Those laws prohibit the transfer of weapons and munitions when there is credible evidence that the arms will be used by the country to commit, or aggravate the risk that the country will commit, war crimes, genocide, crimes against humanity, grave breaches of the Geneva Conventions, and other serious violations of international humanitarian law or international human rights law.

The letter quoted the [sworn declaration](#) of Josh Paul that was filed in the [Defense for Children International-Palestine v. Biden lawsuit](#) in which Palestinians sued President Joe Biden, Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Lloyd Austin for failure to prevent genocide and complicity in genocide. Paul served as director of congressional and public affairs in the State Department's Bureau of Political-Military Affairs before resigning in October 2023 in protest of U.S. arms transfers to Israel.

"I believe it is clear that the U.S. government is failing not only to execute the due diligence required under existing U.S. laws, but is actively creating and utilizing processes that help insulate Israel from accountability or sanctions in accordance with existing U.S. laws and policies," Paul wrote in his declaration in the lawsuit. "The failure to execute meaningful due diligence or adequately apply existing U.S. laws permits the unfettered flow of military assistance to Israel forces with minimal oversight that leads to unnecessary civilian harm, gross violations of human rights, and impunity for violations of international law."

Meanwhile, on June 6, [Israeli airstrikes](#) on a United Nations-run school in central Gaza killed at least 40 people with explosive weapons provided by the United States. The school was sheltering about 6,000 displaced Palestinians, UNRWA Commissioner General Philippe Lazzarini said.

And on June 8, Israeli occupying forces, with U.S. support, killed at least 274 people, including dozens of children, and injured nearly 700 in a raid to rescue four hostages held by Hamas.

The same day, tens of thousands of people demonstrated at the White House in Washington, D.C. to protest the use of U.S. weapons and diplomatic support for Israel's genocide in Gaza.

The organizers of the Appeal for Redress encourage civilian supporters to share the appeal with their networks so that it reaches a larger number of service members.

\*

Note to readers: Please click the share button above. Follow us on Instagram and Twitter and subscribe to our Telegram Channel. Feel free to repost and share widely Global Research articles.

*Marjorie Cohn is professor emerita at Thomas Jefferson School of Law, dean of the People's Academy of International Law and past president of the National Lawyers Guild. She sits on the national advisory boards of Assange Defense and Veterans For Peace. A member of the bureau of the International Association of Democratic Lawyers, she is the U.S. representative to the continental advisory council of the Association of American Jurists. Her books include Drones and Targeted Killing: Legal, Moral and Geopolitical Issues.*

*Featured image: Self-immolation of Aaron Bushnell (Licensed under Fair Use)*

The original source of this article is [Truthout](#)  
Copyright © [Prof. Marjorie Cohn](#), [Truthout](#), 2024

---

**[Comment on Global Research Articles on our Facebook page](#)**

**[Become a Member of Global Research](#)**

Articles by: [Prof. Marjorie Cohn](#)

**Disclaimer:** The contents of this article are of sole responsibility of the author(s). The Centre for Research on Globalization will not be responsible for any inaccurate or incorrect statement in this article. The Centre of Research on Globalization grants permission to cross-post Global Research articles on community internet sites as long the source and copyright are acknowledged together with a hyperlink to the original Global Research article. For publication of Global Research articles in print or other forms including commercial internet sites, contact: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)

[www.globalresearch.ca](http://www.globalresearch.ca) contains copyrighted material the use of which has not always been specifically authorized by the copyright owner. We are making such material available to our readers under the provisions of "fair use" in an effort to advance a better understanding of political, economic and social issues. The material on this site is distributed without profit to those who have expressed a prior interest in receiving it for research and educational purposes. If you wish to use copyrighted material for purposes other than "fair use" you must request permission from the copyright owner.

For media inquiries: [publications@globalresearch.ca](mailto:publications@globalresearch.ca)