

US Urges Israel to Protect Civilians, Sends More Bombs

The US has provided Israel roughly 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells since 7 October as Israel has killed some 20,000 Palestinians

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US Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin on 2 December urged Israel to protect civilians during its campaign against Hamas in Gaza, even as the US military continues to send 2,000-pound bombs and artillery to the Israeli army for use in the densely populated and besieged enclave.

Austin told the Reagan National Defense Forum in California on Saturday that shielding noncombatants in the densely populated and besieged enclave is necessary for victory in the urban fight.

Austin stated that he had "learned a thing or two about urban warfare" while fighting in Iraq and leading the campaign against the Islamic State (ISIS).

"The lesson is that you can only win in urban warfare by protecting civilians," Austin stressed. "If you drive [Gaza's civilians] into the arms of the enemy, you replace a tactical victory with a strategic defeat."

Austin's comments came one day after fighting between Israel and Hamas resumed after a week-long truce.

On Saturday, the Gaza Health Ministry reported Israeli bombing had killed 700 Palestinians in just the past 24 hours.

Since 7 October, Israel has killed some 20,000 Palestinians in Gaza, the majority women and children.

Despite requests by US officials that Israel kill fewer Palestinian civilians, the *Wall Street Journal* (WSJ) [reported](#) on 1 December that the US military continues to provide Israel large amounts of lethal weapons.

The US has provided Israel roughly 15,000 bombs and 57,000 artillery shells since 7 October.

This includes some 100 BLU-109, 2,000-pound bunker buster bombs, which Israel used to kill 100 Palestinians in just one strike in the Jabaliya refugee camp in Gaza, according to US officials.

Austin went on to tell lawmakers, corporate and defense leaders, and government officials attending the security conference that

“Like Hamas, ISIS was deeply embedded in urban areas. And the international coalition against ISIS worked hard to protect civilians and create humanitarian corridors, even during tough battles.”

However, the US campaign against ISIS in urban areas of the Iraqi city of Mosul and Syrian city of Raqqa caused widespread destruction and huge numbers of civilian casualties.

Defending US support of Israel and Ukraine, Austin said

“the world will only become more dangerous if tyrants and terrorists believe that they can get away with wholesale aggression and mass slaughter.”

“You’ll hear some people try to brand an American retreat from responsibility as bold new leadership,” he said. “Make no mistake: It is not bold. It is not new. And it is not leadership.”

Austin, a former board member of weapons manufacturer Raytheon, then asked the lawmakers in the crowd to pass both the military’s budget and the supplemental funding for both wars.

However, even some Israel supporters in the US Congress are taking previously unthinkable views. A group of Senate Democrats has considered putting restrictions on the aid that the US gives to Israel, such as compelling it to follow international law.

Senator Chris Murphy expressed that “the level of civilian harm inside Gaza is unacceptable, unsustainable.”

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Featured image: Bombs undergoing maintenance at Mountain Home Air Force Base in Idaho in 2020.(Photo credit: AIRMAN 1ST CLASS AKEEM K. CAMPBELL)

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