

The US aid relationship with Israel is unlike any other in the world, in sheer volume, the amount is the most generous foreign aid program ever between any two countries.

Although Israel is an advanced, industrialized, technologically sophisticated country, it receives more US aid per capita annually than the total annual [Gross Domestic Product] per capita of several Arab states. Approximately a third of the entire US foreign aid budget goes to Israel, even though Israel comprises just one-thousandth of the world's total population [0.001 per cent], and already has one of the world's higher per capita incomes.

US government officials argue that this money is necessary for "moral" reasons—some even say that Israel is a "democracy battling for its very survival." If that were the real reason, however, aid should have been highest during Israel's early years, and would have declined, as Israel grew stronger. Yet the pattern has been just the opposite. 99 per cent of all US aid to Israel took place after the June 1967 war, when Israel found itself more powerful than any combination of Arab armies.

The US supports Israel's dominance so it can serve as "a surrogate for American interests

in this vital strategic region. Israel has helped defeat radical nationalist movements" and



has been a testing ground for US made weaponry. Moreover, the intelligence agencies of both countries have "collaborated," and Israel has funnelled US arms to third countries that the US [could] not send arms to directly, like: South Africa (under apartheid), the Contras, Guatemala (under the military junta), Iraq and even Iran. Zunes cited an Israeli analyst who said: "Its like Israel has just become another federal agency when it's convenient to use and you want something done quietly." Although the strategic relationship between the US and the Gulf Arab states in the region has been strengthening in recent years, these states do not have the political stability, the technological sophistication, or the number of higher-trained armed forces personnel as does Israel.

Matti Peled, former Israeli major general and Knesset member, told Zunes that he and most Israeli generals believe this aid is "little more than an American subsidy to US arms manufacturers," considering that the majority of military aid to Israel is used to buy weapons from the US. Moreover, arms to Israel create more demand for weaponry in Arab states.

AIAPAC [the American Israel Public Affairs Committee], the pro-Israel lobby, and other similar groups, further encourages US aid to Israel.

The results of the short-term thinking behind US policy are tragic, not just for the immediate victims but eventually for Israel itself and American interests in the region. The US



is sending enormous amounts of aid to the Middle East, and yet "we are less secure than ever - both in terms of US interests abroad and for individual Americans". Zunes referred to a growing and increasing hostility of the average Arab towards the US. In the long term, said Zunes, "peace and stability and cooperation with the vast Arab world is far more important for US interests than this alliance with Israel."

This is not only an issue for those who are working for Palestinian rights, but it also jeopardizes the entire agenda of those of us concerned about human rights, concerned about arms control, concerned about international law. Zunes sees significant potential in building a broad-based movement around it.

Stephen Zunes - Associate Professor of Politics and Chair, Peace and Justice Studies Program, San Francisco University

COST TO US TAXPAYERS OF US AID TO ISRAEL

Grand Total (1949-2000)

\$84,854,827,200

Interest Costs Borne by US

\$49,936,680,000

Total Cost to US Taxpayers

\$134,791,507,200

Total Cost per Israeli \$23,240

- Most Americans are not aware how much of their tax revenue the US government sends to Israel. For the fiscal year ending in September 30, 1997, the US has given Israel \$6.72 billion: \$6.194 billion falls under Israel's foreign aid allotment and \$526 million comes from agencies such as the Department of Commerce, the US Information Agency and the Pentagon. The \$6.72 billion figure does not include loan guarantees and annual compound interest totalling \$3.122 billion the US pays on money borrowed to give to Israel. It does not include the cost to US taxpayers of IRS tax exemptions that donors can claim when they donate money to Israeli charities. (Donors claim approximately \$1 billion in Federal tax deductions annually. This ultimately costs to US tax payers \$280 million to \$390 million.)
- Total US aid to Israel is approximately one-third of the American foreign- aid budget, even though Israel comprises just 0.001 percent of the world's popula-

tion and already has one of the world's higher per capita incomes.

- Since 1949 the US has given Israel a total of \$84.85 billion. The interest costs borne by US tax payers on behalf of Israel are \$49.937 billion, thus making the total amount of aid given to Israel since 1949 \$134.787 billion. **This may mean that US government has given more federal aid to the average Israeli citizen in a given year than it has given to the average American citizen.**
- In the fiscal year 2002 US approved \$2.04 billion in military aid and \$720 million in economic aid for Israel, as well as important **provisions which enable Israel to maximize the benefits of the aid such as payment of the money in a lump sum** at the beginning of the fiscal year
- All past US loans to Israel have eventually been forgiven by Congress.

Friends of Al Aqsa is a voluntary organisation concerned with the defence of Al Aqsa Haram Sharif and the protection of Palestinian Human Rights.

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US AID TO ISRAEL



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