

Particularly appalling is the Israeli cabinet's lack of any strategic outlook, either for a cease-fire and the release of captives or for a "day-after," which can only suggest that this war will continue to claim lives and inflict suffering upon many more people, to the tune of American legislators' applause. Netanyahu was careful not to commit to any deal with Hamas because keeping his coalition intact is more important to him not only than Palestinian lives but also the lives of the captives. He was more interested in the heart emoji that his National Security Minister Itamar Ben-Gvir sent him on X after the speech than in sending the Israeli negotiation team to Doha, the departure of which has once more been postponed. It has been revealed that four more

captives have been killed while in captivity, at least one of them by Israeli military fire. At this rate and with no cease-fire deal in the offing, who knows how many of them will return alive and in what condition? Perhaps naively, it might have been expected of Netanyahu that at long last, he would find the courage, while thousands of miles from home, to at least hint at his responsibility for the failures of October 7 and show some remorse, maybe some regrets for all the innocent lives lost. But this is not in his nature and especially not when his wife Sarah and son Yair are watching from the gallery. The speech at Capitol Hill was a home game, for which only his own supporters showed up, while most of his critics watched it on the screen. Have

we learnt anything new from Netanyahu's speech? Not at all. It was just another illustration of his populist rhetoric, which has appeal in some quarters in Washington. But this will not end the war in Gaza or avert one with Hezbollah, and it will not hasten either the return of the captives or a future of security based on peace with the Palestinians. Neither will it put Israeli society back on the tracks after Netanyahu derailed it with his assault on the country's democratic institutions. Without rectifying all of this, a speech is just a speech, and time sadly trudges by without favor for the Israeli and the Palestinian people, as well as the rest of the international community.

The article first appeared on Arab News.

Netanyahu's Congressional address A catalogue of deception

ANALYSIS

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's speech to the US Congress on Wednesday was not just a political performance; it was a troubling display of deceit. Delivered amid protests outside the US Capitol and widespread criticism, Netanyahu's address was riddled with inaccuracies and falsehoods that distorted the reality of the Gaza conflict and undermined international discourse.

One of the most glaring falsehoods was Netanyahu's claim that "despite all the lies you've heard, the war in Gaza has one of the lowest ratios of combatants to non-combatant casualties in the history of urban warfare." This statement is not just misleading but fundamentally untrue. Gaza's Health Ministry reports that the death toll has reached nearly 40,000. This figure, backed by lists of deceased individuals and verified by past UN assessments, starkly contrasts with Netanyahu's portrayal. The vast majority of the casualties in Gaza are civilians, including tens of thousands of women and children. To suggest that such a high number of civilian deaths indicates a low ratio of combatants is a deliberate attempt to obscure the scale of the humanitarian crisis.

roughly half of whom were children. Amnesty International condemned those attacks as "unlawful" and evidence of Israel's continued flouting of international humanitarian law, with entire families being wiped out with little accountability. Compounding the falsehoods, a panel of ten independent UN rapporteurs declared only last month that Gaza is experiencing a famine, attributing it to Israel's "intentional and targeted starvation campaign against the Palestinian people". This dire assessment highlights the severe humanitarian crisis that Netanyahu's speech glossed over, opting instead to present a dangerously distorted picture. Netanyahu spun a tale of humanitarian generosity, claiming Israel has allowed more than 40,000 aid trucks

on the brink of famine, making the Israeli PM's claims not only misleading but a desperate attempt to mask a dire humanitarian crisis with a façade of false benevolence.

Distorting truth

The gap between Netanyahu's rhetoric and the situation on the ground is further illustrated by recent public opinion within Israel itself. A poll by Israel's Channel 12 News showed that two-thirds of Israelis believe that securing the return of captives is more important than continuing the war in Gaza.

This shift in public sentiment reflects growing discontent with Netanyahu's approach and suggests that his touting of "total victory" (in the Congress address) is being increasingly viewed as unrealistic and bogus.



A woman cries following an Israeli army operation on an area previously designated as safe for displaced Palestinians in Rafah, southern Gaza Strip.

HAITHAM IMAD/EPA

Outright lies

Netanyahu also asserted that civilian casualties in the southern Gaza City of Rafah are "practically none". This claim is not only far-fetched but an outright lie. Israeli strikes in Rafah have indeed resulted in significant civilian casualties. For instance, a strike in May ignited a fire in a tent camp housing displaced Palestinians, killing at least 46 people.

Netanyahu's description of this attack as a "mishap" trivialises the reality of the tragedy. Earlier in February, Israeli air strikes killed at least 95 civilians,

into Gaza, delivering half a million tonnes of food. But this claim is a glaring falsehood. According to UN data, just 28,000 aid trucks have entered Gaza since the conflict erupted, and routes into the territory have been severely restricted. The Rafah crossing, a crucial lifeline, has been blocked by Israeli forces since early May, choking off aid to southern Gaza.

International NGOs and the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification, the world's foremost authority on famine, have warned that Gaza teeters

Netanyahu's speech to Congress was not just a political manoeuvre but a calculated effort to manipulate perceptions and justify actions that have been widely condemned.

By distorting the truth, Netanyahu not only misled the US Congress but also perpetuated a narrative that undermines efforts toward a genuine resolution of the Gaza crisis. Only through a clear understanding of the situation can meaningful progress toward peace and justice be achieved.

The article first appeared on GulfNews.

US must stop arming Israel



By Farrah Hassen
Scholar, author

OPINION

In a shameful moment in US history, an accused war criminal addressed Congress on July 24.

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu came to plead for more arms for his war on Gaza, where the International

Court of Justice has found it "plausible" that Israel is committing genocide. "Give us the tools faster, and we'll finish the job faster," Netanyahu said.

The International Criminal Court (ICC) is seeking a warrant for Netanyahu's arrest for war crimes and crimes against humanity. But instead of arresting him, Congress gave him multiple standing ovations.

Beyond applause, the US government is also Israel's chief supplier of arms. Every year, Congress sends billions in military aid — including thousands of high-powered explosives and other weapons since October.

To avoid complicity in war crimes and genocide, these shipments must end.



Demonstrators from Jewish Voice for Peace protest the war in Gaza at the Canon House Building in Washington, DC, on July 23, 2024.

TIERNEY L. CROSS/GETTY IMAGES

There is overwhelming evidence that Israeli forces under Netanyahu's leadership have committed massive human rights atrocities against Palestinians in Gaza. And that's against the backdrop of an illegal military occupation of Palestinian territory and apartheid, as another ICJ ruling confirmed recently.

Nonetheless, Congress invited Netanyahu to speak. He used this platform to deny any responsibility for the slaughter, famine, and catastrophic destruction in Gaza — and to denigrate Americans who are rightly horrified by their government's support for his genocidal campaign.

As Netanyahu spoke, thousands of people took to the streets near the Capitol. Braving tear gas and arrest, they gave voice to the majority of Americans who demand an immediate, permanent cease-fire in Gaza and an embargo on arms to Israel.

Most Americans are disgusted that US-made bombs keep turning up at massacre after massacre. Over the past few weeks alone, Israel has repeatedly bombed so-called "safe zones" and at least eight schools in Gaza where thousands of forcibly displaced Palestinians were sheltering.

On July 9, the Israeli military murdered at least 30 Palestinians who were playing soccer at the Al-Awda school using GBU-39 bombs made by Boeing. Israel also dropped GBU-39s on another UN school-turned-shelter in the Nuseirat refugee camp on July 6, killing at least 40, and before that on Palestinian families sheltering in plastic tents during the May 26 Rafah massacre.

On July 13, Israeli forces killed 90 people and injured hundreds more at the Al-Mawasi refugee camp that Israel had designated a "safe zone". Children were reportedly found "in pieces". Eight 2,000-pound bombs turned the civilian area into a "smoldering

crater". At least one of the munitions was a Boeing-made JDAM. Despite these atrocities, the weapons continue to flow.

In May, President Biden announced that he would pause the delivery of 2,000-pound bombs ahead of Israel's invasion of Rafah, which Biden had called "a red line". However, Israel has still received destructive 500-pound bomb shipments despite invading Rafah, and the killing in Gaza continues.

These weapons shipments violate both international and US law. The United States is legally obligated to withhold military assistance when US weapons are used to violate human rights.

The UN Human Rights Council and various experts have called on all countries to end the sale and transfer of military equipment to Israel — or else risk complicity in crimes, including genocide. They called on arms manufacturers supplying Israel to do the same, including Boeing, General Dynamics, Lockheed Martin, and Northrop Grumman.

Polls show that a majority of Americans support closing the arms pipeline to Israel. In advance of Netanyahu's speech, seven major labor unions representing nearly 6 million workers called on President Biden to "immediately halt all military aid to Israel".

The voices of the American people deserve more respect in Congress than Netanyahu's lies and demands. An immediate end to all US weapons transfers to Israel is long overdue, alongside a permanent cease-fire and a larger pursuit of freedom and justice for the Palestinian people.

We must not allow ourselves to become a nation that applauds mass murder.

The article first appeared on Eurasia Review.