



# U.S. Threatens Arms Suspension Despite Steady Gaza Aid Flow

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*Though Hamas's October 7 attack and the subsequent war has undoubtedly produced considerable hardships for Palestinians in Gaza, U.S. claims, in a recent [letter](#) from the U.S. Secretaries of State and Defense to the Israeli government, of a dire collapsing humanitarian situation in Gaza caused by Israeli indifference are categorically and provably false—including the claim that assistance entering Gaza in September was the lowest of any month in the war. In fact, Israel's facilitation of massive quantities of aid into Gaza—including tens of millions of liters of fuel and hundreds of thousands of tons worth of food—is in many respects an unprecedented measure in wartime.*

*The fact that, after previous U.S. warnings of imminent humanitarian catastrophe in Gaza proved to be overblown, the United States would again accuse Israel of not providing enough aid and, moreover, threaten to cut off arms shipments will only embolden Israel's adversaries at a critical juncture in the war, just days after Iran launched one of the largest ballistic missile attacks in history against Israel.*

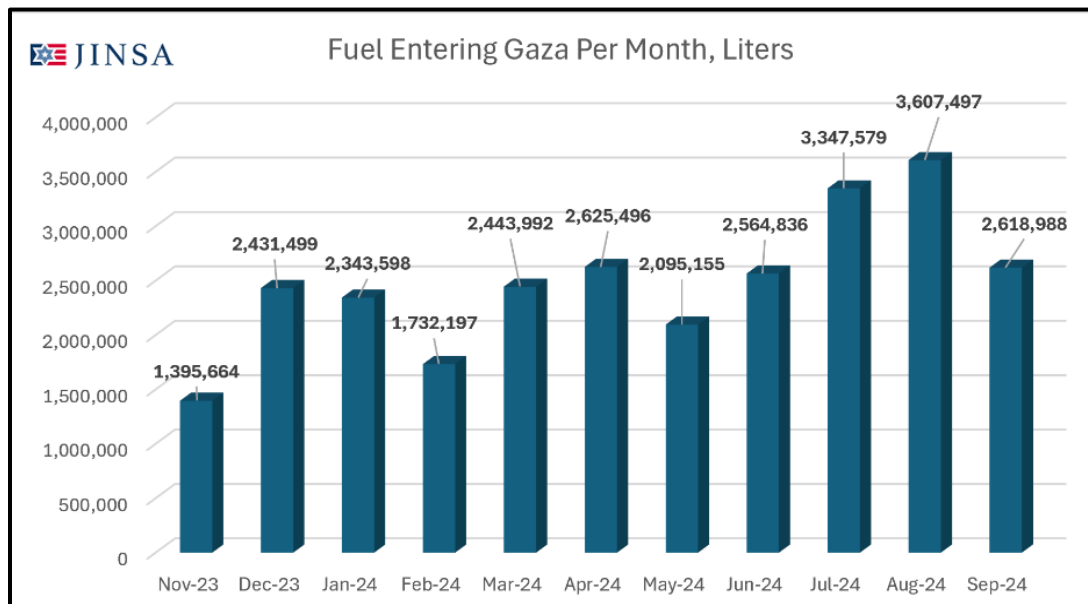
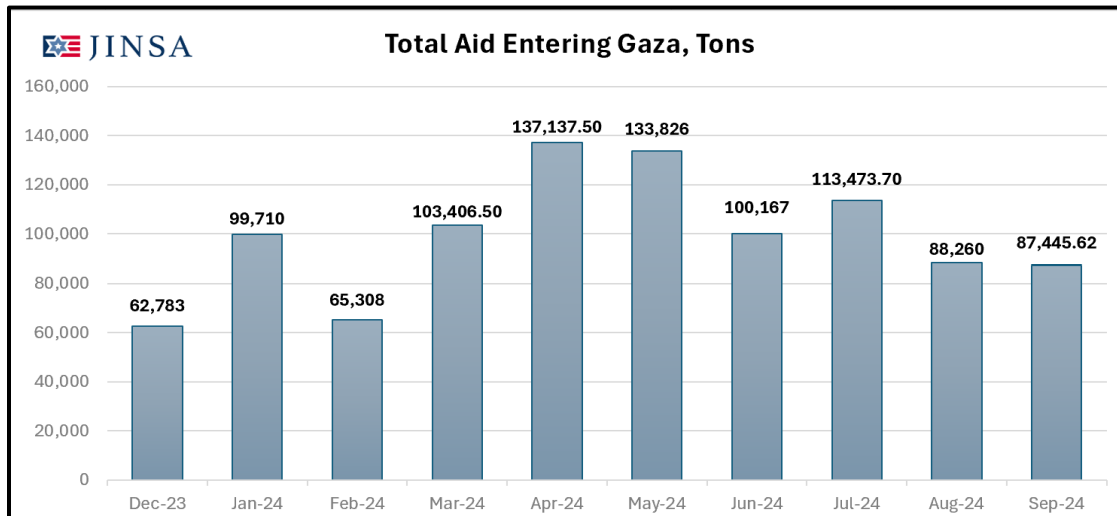
*U.S. efforts to impose impossible standards of conduct on Israel and limitations on U.S. arms shipments to Israel will only prolong Israel's operations against Hamas, draw out the conflict in Gaza, and undermine the two countries' shared interest in defeating Iran's terror proxies.*

## What Happened?

- On October 16, *Axios* and multiple other outlets [reported](#) that U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken and Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin delivered a letter to the Israeli government implying a potential cutoff of U.S. military assistance to Israel due to an alleged “deteriorating humanitarian situation in Gaza” and inadequate Israeli measures to address it.
  - » In addition to its criticism of aid flow levels, the United States accused Israel of facilitating overcrowding in the Mawasi safe zone, delaying aid trucks and encumbering aid deliveries, forced displacement of civilians from northern Gaza, and overly austere policies towards the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), among other critiques.
  - » The letter, which was [published](#) by *Axios*, stated that “failure to reverse” the alleged trends “may have implications for U.S. policy under NSM-20 and relevant U.S. law,” implying a potential suspension of U.S. arms to Israel.
  - » Moreover, the letter stated that Israel must undertake “concrete measures” within 30 days. The measures, 15 in total, fall into the three categories of surging aid into the Gaza enclave—including 350 trucks' worth a day; ensuring that aid corridors function at full and continuous capacity, and; ending the “isolation” of northern Gaza.
  - » According to an article in Israel's *Ynetnews* outlet, Israeli officials [viewed](#) the letter as the “harshest message in decades” from the United States.

## Why Is It Important?

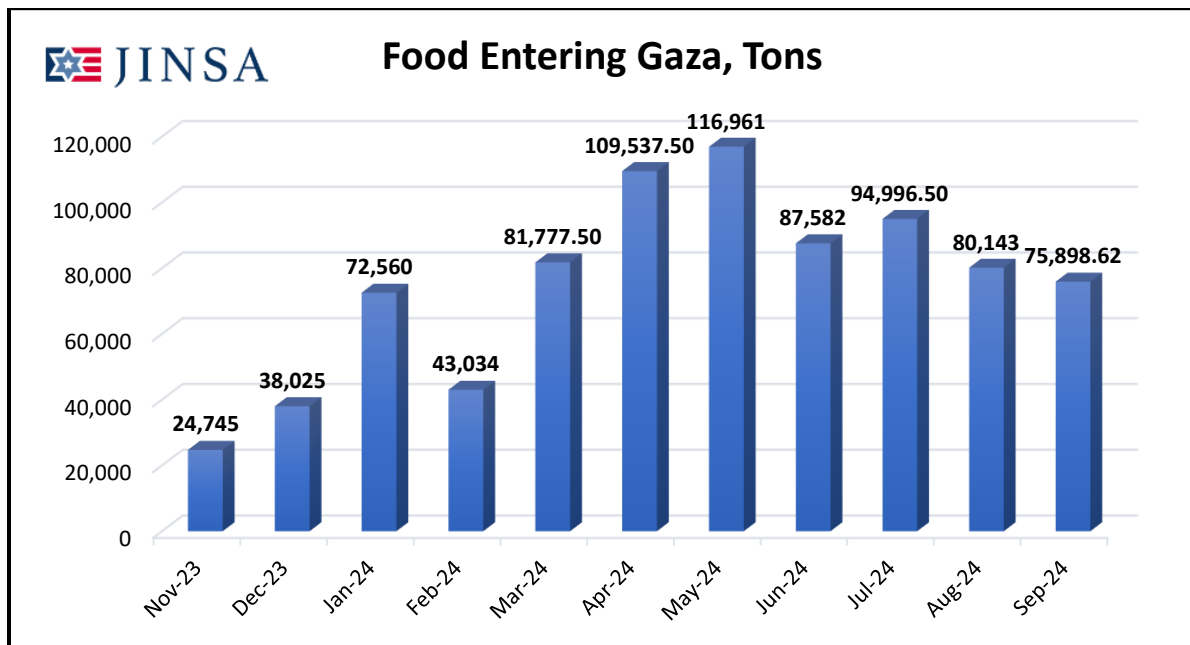
- U.S. claims of a dire, collapsing humanitarian situation in Gaza caused by Israeli indifference are categorically false. Israel's facilitation into Gaza of massive quantities of aid—including tens of millions of liters of fuel and hundreds of thousands of tons worth of food—is an unprecedented measure in modern warfare. U.S. efforts to impose impossible standards of civilian care during warfare on Israel are strategically counterproductive for both countries, and limitations on U.S. arms shipments to Israel will only have the effect of prolonging Israel's operations against Hamas and undermining the two countries' shared interest in defeating a key element of Iran's proxy strategy aimed at annihilating Israel and ejecting the United States from the Middle East.



Source: [Israel's COGAT Agency](#)

- Espousing false claims, even in a private letter that U.S. officials must have surmised could be leaked, needlessly damages Israel's reputation at a time of critical yet dissipating legitimacy among Western countries.

- » The letter’s [claim](#) that “assistance entering Gaza in September” was the lowest of any month since the war began flatly contradicted Israel’s published figures, dealing a further blow to Israel by suggesting that the United States doubts Israel’s data.



Source: [Israel's COGAT Agency](#)

- » Past U.S. hand-wringing during the war about widespread humanitarian catastrophe were rendered false, harming not only Israeli but also U.S. credibility.
  - USAID Director Samantha Power [stated](#) in March—citing “food security experts”—that famine in northern Gaza was “imminent between now and May,” though no such famine ever materialized.
  - Less than a month later, photos [circulated](#) of well-stocked markets in northern Gaza replete with food. An independent study [found](#) that between January and April, “food delivered to Gaza supplied the equivalent 3,163 calories per person per day, 40 per cent higher than the accepted humanitarian minimums.”
- Aside from the lack of factual basis for U.S. allegations, the letter makes scarce mention of Hamas’s endemic role in [obstructing](#) humanitarian efforts by stealing vast quantities of aid.
  - » The U.S. letter also sharply critiques Israeli efforts to scale back the problematic role of the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), largely ignoring UNRWA’s systemic [co-optation](#) of the aid process to abet Hamas.
- The U.S. letter, by apportioning all blame for humanitarian suffering in Gaza to Israel, also fails to address core obstacles to addressing any aid shortages that are not Israel’s doing.
  - » In singling out Israel for rebuke, the letter overlooks Egypt’s role in any aid shortfalls.
    - In May, Egypt closed the Rafah Crossing, the sole checkpoint along the Gaza-Egypt border, to aid and [rejected](#) Israeli efforts to reopen it.
- The strategic effects of the letter, both at the current stage of the war and its long-lasting effects as a historical record of [daylight](#) between the two countries, hurts Israel in its strategic legitimacy campaign. The ill-timed and ill-informed letter conveys a presumption of Israeli wrongdoing that opponents of Israel will undoubtedly seize upon at a critical juncture in the expanding multifront war.

- Any arms embargo or weapons slowdown would be counterproductive for both Israel and the United States, given the central U.S. geostrategic interest in Israel emerging victorious over the Iranian terror axis.
  - » Degrading Iran and its proxies is a key U.S. strategic interest in its own right, given the nearly 200 Iran-backed attacks on U.S. personnel in the Middle East in the past year. This strategic interest is only amplified by Iran’s close ties with top U.S. adversaries, including Iran’s arming of Russia in its war against Ukraine.
    - JINSA’s Randi & Charles Wax Senior Fellow John Hannah has [noted](#) that “big picture ... this is not a war just in Gaza against Hamas. It is a war against an Iranian axis ... determined to ... end the American-led international order.”

## What Should the United States Do Next?

- The United States should refrain from counterproductively criticizing Israel’s extraordinary and unprecedented efforts to provide humanitarian aid in wartime.
- Given its professed concern for the humanitarian situation in Gaza, rather than engaging in self-defeating threats to withhold—or actually withholding—arms from Israel, the United States should surge munitions to Israel to ensure its objectives can be met quicker and the war brought to a close faster.