

Press Release: Eleven faith groups presented instances of probable gross violations of human rights by Israeli military and security forces to U.S. Department of State

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WASHINGTON, D.C. — Concerned about specific, well-documented instances of probable gross violations of human rights by Israeli military and security forces, eleven churches and faith-based organizations discussed several case summaries at a meeting today with the U.S. Department of State. Israel is the largest recipient of U.S. foreign military assistance.

The groups said that they were seeking accountability for the observance of human rights in the use of U.S. military assistance as outlined in the Foreign Assistance Act of 1961 as amended and several annual Defense Department appropriations acts. The provisions in these laws are often referred to as the “Leahy Laws” or “Leahy amendments” and, in the case of the Foreign Assistance Act, states “No assistance shall be furnished under this Act or the Arms Export Control Act to any unit of the security forces of a foreign country if the Secretary of State has credible information that such unit has committed a gross violation of human rights.”

The organizations said that, with the information provided, the Department of State should designate the military units involved as ineligible for foreign assistance.

The groups noted that the cases presented at the meeting are part of a comprehensive project to seek accountability for documented human rights violations by Israeli forces and that further cases will be submitted.

In the context of the documentation they provided the Department of State, the groups also affirmed that they stand unequivocally opposed to all human rights violations by any actor -- state or non-state -- as well as any group or individual that is a party to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

The organizations signing a [letter](#) accompanying the documents addressed to Mr. Tom Malinowski, Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Democracy, Human Rights, and Labor, and Ambassador Anne W. Patterson, Assistant Secretary in the Bureau of Near Eastern Affairs, were:

American Friends Service Committee
Conference of Major Superiors of Men
Friends Committee on National Legislation
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
Maryknoll Office for Global Concerns
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Pax Christi International
Pax Christi USA
Presbyterian Church (USA)
United Church of Christ, Justice and Witness Ministries
United Methodist Church, General Board of Church and Society