

*Two U.S. military airmen seek to  
become conscientious objectors  
over genocidal war on Gaza*

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**Senior Airman Larry Hebert is going on a hunger strike while on leave from his duty station to protest the genocide in Gaza. (X /Larry Hebert)**

Washington, June 23 (RHC)-- Two active members of the United States Air Force wish to leave military service and become conscientious objectors over Washington's support for the Israeli military in Gaza.

Larry Hebert and Juan Bettancourt say they will no longer serve the U.S. military due to its role in the war, which has killed more than 37,400 Palestinians, mostly children and women.

They have officially requested, through an existing procedure in the military, to become conscientious objectors, people who refuse to participate in military service on ethical or moral grounds.

Hebert, a senior airman on active duty in the U.S. Air Force, told Al Jazeera there is a long history of conscientious objectors from the US, including in protest against the wars in Vietnam and Iraq. He said he hopes to highlight that becoming a conscientious objector is an option for other active-duty US soldiers.

"I think a lot of service members don't actually know entirely what it is and what their rights are," he said.

While on leave from duty in April, Hebert protested outside the White House, calling for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza and the end of shipments of US weapons to Israel.

Hebert had earlier told U.S. broadcaster NBC News that the death of six-year-old Hind Rajab in February was a turning point. Rajab's family car was targeted by Israeli tanks and she begged for rescue in a phone call as she was stranded inside the car with her dead relatives.

"She looks almost just like my daughter, and that was something that was extremely hard to grasp, is that all these children that have aspirations and dreams and lives that many of us are living and want, and it's wholly unjustified to support what's happening," Hebert told NBC News, adding that he worked on a US operation to provide weapons sales to Israel.

Airman Juan Bettancourt also said he could not support the U.S.'s role after watching Gaza news. "I see the slaughter of thousands of innocent civilians all while the world watches through their smartphones," Bettancourt told NBC, which reported the air force has acted on 36 conscientious objector applications since the beginning of 2021, 29 of which were granted.

By objecting publicly, the pair hope to influence Washington's position on support to Israel.

They have also been influenced by Aaron Bushnell, the U.S. airman who self-immolated in February to protest against the Gaza war.

The U.S. has provided thousands of large bombs, along with other munitions and equipment, as well as intelligence support, to the Israeli military since the start of the war on Gaza.

Those weapons, including 2,000-pound (907 kg) bombs, have been repeatedly used in large-scale attacks that have killed many civilians, including in attacks on United Nations-run schools that are now used as shelters for displaced Palestinians.

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