

U.S. scraps order linking arms sales to international law



An Israeli soldier arranges shells to be used in genocidal war against Palestinians

The order, signed by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden amid concerns over Israel's actions during its war on Gaza, was aimed at preventing US arms sales from contributing to human rights abuses abroad [File: Gil Cohen-Magen/AFP]

Washington, February 25 (RHC)-- The White House has revoked a key policy order linking arms sales to international law on human rights, according to reports.

U.S. President Donald Trump ordered the key policy to be scrapped, The Washington Post reported on Monday quoting unnamed sources.

The order, signed by Trump's predecessor Joe Biden amid concerns over Israel's actions during its war on Gaza, was aimed at preventing U.S. arms sales from contributing to human rights abuses abroad. The sources told the daily that National Security Advisor Mike Waltz had issued a memo formalising the decision.

National Security Memorandum-20, signed by Biden in February 2024, required assurances that US weapons would not be used in violation of international humanitarian law. The measure was viewed as a response to a growing concern that Israel was committing human rights violations amid its bombardment of Gaza.

The memorandum was one of the few remaining Biden policies addressing the conflict. All mention of the memorandum has been scrubbed from the White House website, with searches resulting in a 404 error.

A May 2024 report, mandated by the memorandum, stated that while Israel may have violated international humanitarian law, the Biden administration could not verify specific cases of civilian harm because of the ongoing war.

Trump's decision to overturn the memorandum follows moves to unfreeze heavy weapon shipments to Israel and lift sanctions on Israeli settlers in the occupied West Bank.

On February 7, the Trump administration approved the sale of more than \$7.4bn worth of bombs, missiles, and related military equipment to Israel.

The latest move effectively removes the last vestige of Biden's policies on the Gaza war, which has killed at least 48,346 and left more than 111,759 others wounded.

Senator Chris Van Hollen, a prominent advocate for the memorandum, condemned the move to scrap it, calling it "shameful" and a blow to global human rights and US national security and its standing around the world.

He added that the reversal undermines the ability of taxpayers to ensure their money aligns with US laws and values. "This is another clear example of Trump's blatant indifference to American values," he stated.

U.S. Senator Jim Risch, a Republican and chairman of the Senate Foreign Relations Committee, welcomed the move. He criticised the original order as a political manoeuvre "conceived of as a means to embarrass our ally Israel in its time of need", arguing that the policy had weakened US alliances while benefitting rivals such as Russia and China.

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