Jewish New Yorkers rally to demand an end to U.S. military funding of Israel

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New York, March 7 (RHC)-- Hundreds of Jewish New Yorkers rallied and marched on the home of Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer to protest his embrace of far-right Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu amid growing violence against Palestinians—violence that demonstrators said is enabled by the U.S. government's unwavering military and diplomatic support.

"As Jews who support freedom and dignity for all people, no exceptions, we will not just sit in horror as the state of Israel carries out ethnic cleansing in our names," said Jewish Voice for Peace member Jay Saper. "We are calling for an end to all U.S. military funding to Israel now."

The protest came less than two weeks after Schumer visited Israel and pledged the U.S. Senate's "fullest support" even as the Netanyahu government faces mass demonstrations over its authoritarian judicial reform proposal and international backlash for expanding illegal settlements on Palestinian territory.

"What we are witnessing is not a ' cycle of violence,' but rather a military superpower against an occupied people," said Eve Feldberg, a member of Jewish Voice for Peace's New York chapter. "Make no mistake—the Israeli government's oppression of Palestinians is the root cause of every violent death."

Israeli forces have killed dozens of Palestinians since the start of the new year. In addition to official state violence, Palestinians are also facing increasingly frequent attacks by Israeli settlers, including a massive assault on the town of Huwara last week.

Last year, the United Nations recorded nearly 850 Israeli settler attacks on Palestinians in the occupied West Bank. "Research by the Israeli organization Yesh Din found that 93% of all investigations into settler attacks against Palestinians in the occupied West Bank were closed without an indictment in the period between 2005 and 2022," Amnesty International noted in a statement last week. "Yesh Din also found that more than 80% of Palestinians' complaints to Israeli police were not investigated at all."

Joining demonstrators during Sunday's rally and march was New York State Sen. Jabari Brisport, who said that "until Palestinians are free, neither are we."

Brisport also took aim at the U.S. government's annual military aid to Israel, declaring that "every dollar of that $3.8 billion" is "killing Palestinians abroad and it's killing Americans who can't afford health insurance."

In an interview just days before Schumer's trip to Israel last month, Sen. Bernie Sanders of Vermont said he is "very worried about what Netanyahu is doing and... what may happen to the Palestinian people."

"The United States gives billions of dollars in aid to Israel," said Sanders, a member of the Senate Democratic leadership. "And I think we've got to put some strings attached to that and say you cannot run a racist government. You cannot turn your back on a two-state solution. You cannot demean the Palestinian people there. You just can't do it and then come to America and ask for money."

The senator went on to say that he "may well" introduce legislation to place conditions on U.S. military aid to Israel, adding, "If a government is acting in a racist way, and they want billions of dollars from the taxpayers of the United States, I think you say: 'Sorry, but it's not acceptable. You want our money? Fine. This is what you got to do to get it.'"

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