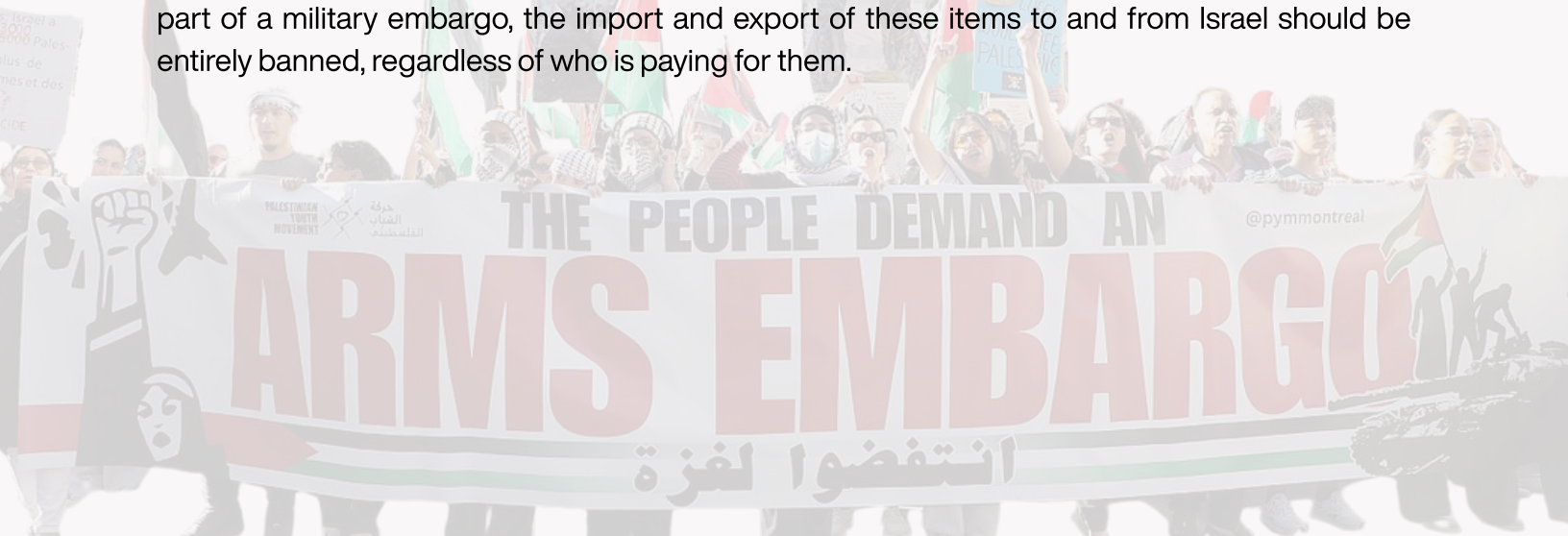
# WHAT IS A MILITARY EMBARGO?

Polls show that the majority of the American public supports a military embargo on Israel, due to its genocide of Palestinians and wars across the region. While ending US funding to Israel under the current Memorandum Of Understanding (MOU), the 10 year agreement supplying $38 billion in U.S. funding to Israel, is an important component in ending US complicity in Israel's atrocity crimes (war crimes, crimes against humanity and genocide), it is just one component of a military embargo.

States have a legal obligation under international law:

- Not to sell military materiel (including dual-use items) to Israel, or allow the export of such items by private companies.
- Not to buy or import Israeli military materiel (thereby financing Israel's war machine).
- Not to transit military materiel to Israel through their territory.
- Not to allow academic collaboration in military research that directly or indirectly enables Israel's illegal occupation, apartheid and violations of the Genocide Convention.

"Dual use" means that items can be used for both civilian and military applications. Parts and components, as well as technology and software (AI, cloud, etc.) that may not typically be considered "weapons" should also be part of a comprehensive military embargo. These items are also included in the definition of "military materiel," which means any equipment, weapons, supplies, parts, and infrastructure that enable armed forces to conduct military operations. As part of a military embargo, the import and export of these items to and from Israel should be entirely banned, regardless of who is paying for them.



# HOW SHOULD DSA ELECTEDS ENGAGE?

Elected officials should vote against any proposal that gives direct or indirect funding to Israel or that violates any of the above obligations. They should work to prevent joint military research and co-development of weapons, technology, or other military industries in collaboration with Israel, and prevent public institutions from facilitating or investing in Israel's military industry. They should also hold corporations under their jurisdiction and involved in illegal military relations with Israel, accountable, including American subsidiaries of Israeli companies. As a minimum, this includes ensuring they don't have access to public subsidies, spaces, and other support.

**The goal is to end all US complicity in Israel's violations of international law. A comprehensive military embargo is the most immediate and urgent step toward achieving that goal.**

As American public support for Israel continues to sharply decline, the Israel lobby is attempting to rebrand US support for Israel. Efforts to deepen US-Israel military cooperation are increasingly being framed as technology "partnerships" and "innovation" or economic collaboration, rather than military "aid." Elected officials should recognize this deceptive narrative and oppose any form of military collaboration, co-development, or trade that contributes to Israel's military capacity.

## WAYS TO TAKE ACTION

- Denying the approval of export licenses for companies selling weapons, military components, or dual-use military technologies to Israel.
- Conducting congressional, state, and local oversight, and enacting legislation where possible, to investigate and prohibit the transport of weapons and military cargo to Israel by commercial carriers, including FedEx, UPS, United Airlines, and Maersk.
- Ending tax subsidies to companies producing equipment for the Israeli military, such as Elbit America, an American subsidiary of the Israeli company Elbit Systems Ltd, including in Charleston, South Carolina.
- Ending university research partnerships and military-funded research projects, such as MIT's research funded by the Israeli Ministry of Defense, and grant funding to the University of Central Florida from Elbit Systems, or collaborations with military-linked institutions like the Technion.
- Ending public contracts with Palantir, which supplies the Israeli military with deadly AI programs and surveillance technologies that Israel uses to commit its genocide of Palestinians. The New York public hospital system dropped its contract with Palantir in 2026.
- Ending investments in Caterpillar, which supplies custom bulldozers to the Israeli military, by state and municipal pension and investment funds. The office of the state treasurer in Washington sold off all state investments in Caterpillar in 2026.

# HOW SHOULD DSA ELECTEDS DISCUSS A MILITARY EMBARGO?

- **A military embargo is about ending US complicity in Israel's crimes and goes beyond just ending military "aid."** Military sales and purchases, military economic and academic research partnerships, technology sales, co-development of weapons and technology, and investments, financing, and licensing all feed apartheid Israel's coffers and enable its grave violations of human rights against Palestinians, Lebanese and other peoples in the South-West Asia region.
- **A military embargo prevents all trade/transfer of military materiel, which includes weapons, weapon parts, dual-use items, etc.** It includes not only bombs and missiles, but also technology, software, components, vehicles, steel, jet fuel, surveillance equipment, and other parts, goods and services used by the Israeli military. Transporting any of these items through US territory must also be prohibited under a comprehensive military embargo.
- It doesn't matter who pays for it. Whether the US funds Israel's military purchases, Israel buys weapons directly from US companies, or the US and Israel jointly develop weapons and military technology, all of these forms of military cooperation must be banned under a military embargo.
- A military embargo is a legal not just ethical obligation. Public institutions should not contribute to violations of international law. Under international law, as affirmed by recent rulings by the International Court of Justice, states have an obligation not to assist in maintaining Israel's unlawful occupation and to prevent complicity in serious violations of international law including atrocity crimes. As dozens of UN human rights experts said following that ICJ decision, for states to comply with it, they must "Impose a full arms embargo on Israel, halting all arms agreements, imports, exports and transfers, including of dual-use items that could be used against the Palestinian population under occupation."
- **Taxpayer dollars should not facilitate war crimes or human rights violations.** This principle should apply consistently, regardless of the country involved. We should be investing in healthcare, education, union jobs, infrastructure, and the things people need to thrive.
- **State and local governments have a role to play.** Elected officials can examine procurement, public investments, university partnerships, ports, airports, economic incentives and tax breaks, and other public partnerships or use of public resources to ensure their city or state is not complicit in violations of international law.

# CONTINUED

- **A military embargo is a nonviolent accountability measure.** Palestinian civil society has called for lawful, targeted sanctions on Israel in line with international law, similar to the sanctions imposed on apartheid South Africa that served as the final blow to the apartheid regime. The highest judicial and legislative bodies of global governance, including the International Court of Justice (ICJ) and the UN General Assembly (UNGA), have made clear that sanctions against Israel's regime of genocide and apartheid are an obligation under international law, not a discretion. In the words of UN human rights experts, this means states, including local authorities, must "Cancel or suspend economic relationships, trade agreements and academic relations with Israel that may contribute to its unlawful presence and apartheid regime in the occupied Palestinian territory."
- **The United States is already spending an exorbitant amount of money on support for Israel.** Beyond existing commitments, current and projected costs to the US related to Israel's wars have risen dramatically, with some experts estimating the true cost for US taxpayers of the US-Israeli war in Iran will exceed $1 trillion. At a time when Americans are struggling to make ends meet, Congress should not authorize additional public resources to fuel Israel's genocidal violence and wars of aggression across one of the most vital regions of the world.
- **The American public does not want its government to support Israel's illegal wars of aggression or its genocide against Palestinians.** And they want more transparency and a voice in how these decisions are made. At a time when the majority of Americans do not want the US to increase its material support for apartheid Israel, elected officials should not be approving new military partnerships or funding, and especially not through opaque agreements that limit public oversight, such as the US-Israel Defense Technology Cooperation Initiative.