

# [***The Day the U.S. Didn't Say 'No' to Israel's Critics | Opinion***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BMT-BRT1-DY68-1006-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Highlight:** The writing has been on the wall for weeks. That was the feeling in Jerusalem on Monday evening after the United States abstained during a vote at the United Nations Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip.

**Body**

The writing has been on the wall for weeks. That was the feeling in Jerusalem on Monday evening after the United States abstained during a vote at the [*United Nations*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/united-nations?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) Security Council calling for an immediate ceasefire in the Gaza Strip. With U.S. standing aside, the resolution passed.

It was on the wall because for the last two months, Israel and the U.S. have been clashing almost daily over the war and what the next steps should be—a new ground offensive in the southern Gaza town of Rafah, or a ceasefire that would, hopefully, include a release of some of the Israeli hostages being held by [*Hamas*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hamas?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

While the U.S. abstention seems to have led to increased tension—Prime Minister [*Benjamin Netanyahu*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/benjamin-netanyahu?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) canceled a delegation that was supposed to fly Monday evening to Washington for talks over Rafah—the situation actually serves both Netanyahu and Biden and underscores what is really happening—this fight is less about the war than it is about ***politics***.

On the one hand, the American decision to let the resolution pass was meant to send a message to Israel that U.S. support is not without conditions. If Israel wants America to veto resolutions at the UN that Jerusalem does not like and to continue supporting the Israel Defense Forces' offensive in Gaza, Netanyahu needs to outline what his diplomatic plan is for Gaza. That's something he has refused to do for months.

Biden has been losing support among progressive democrats and in some swing states like Michigan there is a real fear that the current U.S. position on the war could cause him to lose the November election to former President [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships). He needs to break back to the left, and abstaining at the UNSC is a big step in that direction.

On the other hand, Netanyahu could have let the US abstention slide. He could have ignored the resolution or even embraced the part which mentions the hostages, saying that Israel has no problem agreeing to a ceasefire if the hostages are released. This might have helped lower tensions with Biden, but it would not have served Netanyahu politically.

That can only be achieved by fighting with the U.S. This allows Netanyahu to show the Israeli public that he stands up for them even if it means fighting with allies like the United States. It is an image he has long cultivated and is one that he hopes can help him remain in office despite his government's failures that led to the Hamas attacks on Oct. 7.

In other words, this is a crisis between two allies that is more about each leader's local ***politics*** than it is about substance.

This doesn't mean that there is not a substantive disagreement over the continuation of the war in Gaza. The Americans, for example, want to see Israel scale back the offensive and hold off on entering Rafah without first ensuring that the more than one million displaced Palestinians—sent there by the IDF from the north—are moved to a new and safe location.

Israel, on the other hand, wants to continue degrading Hamas capabilities with the hope that breaking the terrorist battalions in Rafah and destroying the tunnel infrastructure there, will bring the IDF closer to toppling Hamas' rule permanently.

This is a real and legitimate disagreement. That is why senior Israeli officials were supposed to fly to Washington this week to discuss Rafah with their American counterparts.

While this might explain the backstory, we cannot forget that Israel's security is on the line. The U.S.-Israel fight emboldens Hamas, which issued a statement "welcoming" the UNSC resolution. This fight makes the terrorist group believe that Israel is isolated and that if it just holds out a little bit longer, the world will do the job for it and get Israel to stop the war.

This doesn't just put Israel at risk; Hamas's survival endangers the future of the entire Middle East. America does not have to blindly accept Israeli policy—especially when it disagrees—but there is a way for friends to manage their disagreements.

What is happening now is bad for Israel and for the United States. There is a war that needs to be won against an enemy that needs to be defeated. It is time Israel and the U.S. work together, and not—as the UNSC vote seems to show—against one another.

*Yaakov Katz is a senior fellow at JPPI, a global think tank for the Jewish people, and the author of* Shadow Strike: Inside Israel's Secret Mission to Eliminate Syrian Nuclear Power *and* Weapon Wizards: How Israel Became a High-Tech Military Superpower*.*

*The views expressed in this article are the writer's own.*

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2367688/standing-alone.jpg)

**Graphic**

Standing Alone?

John Lamparski/Getty Images

Permanent Representative of Israel to the United Nations Mr. Gilad Erdan speaks during a UN Security Council meeting for a vote on a ceasefire in Gaza at the United Nations headquarters on March 25, in New York City.

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