



U.S. President Joe Biden delivers a prime-time address to the nation about his approaches to the conflict between Israel and Hamas, humanitarian assistance in Gaza and continued support for Ukraine in their war with Russia, from the Oval Office of the White House in Washington, U.S. October 19, 2023. (OSV News photo/Jonathan Ernst/Reuters)

Kate Scanlon

[View Author Profile](#)



OSV News

[View Author Profile](#)

[Join the Conversation](#)

Washington — October 20, 2023

[Share on Bluesky](#)[Share on Facebook](#)[Share on Twitter](#)[Email to a friend](#)[Print](#)

Israel and Ukraine both face existential threats and deserve U.S. aid as they fend off conflict, President Joe Biden said in an Oval Office address to the nation on Oct. 19.

In the televised address following his return from a visit to Israel, Biden argued that although the conflicts are far from the U.S. mainland, "making sure Israel and Ukraine succeed is vital for America's national security."

"History has taught us when terrorists don't pay a price for their terror, when dictators don't pay a price for their aggression, they cause more chaos and death and more destruction," Biden said from behind the Resolute Desk. "They keep going, and the cost and the threats to America and the world keep rising."

Biden requested more than \$105 billion in aid for both conflicts, and other "Critical National Security Priorities," including efforts to ensure U.S. military resources and additional funding for security efforts at the U.S.-Mexico border, according to a release from the White House, as Ukraine continues to fend off Russian President Vladimir Putin's invasion, and Israel responds to an attack by Hamas, a group recognized as a terrorist organization by the United States.

"It's a smart investment that's going to pay dividends for American security for generations, help us keep American troops out of harm's way, help us build a world that is safer, more peaceful, and more prosperous for our children and grandchildren," Biden said.

Remarking on his visits to both war zones, Biden said "Hamas and Putin represent different threats, but they share this in common: They both want to completely annihilate a neighboring democracy -- completely annihilate it."

Biden said Hamas' "stated purpose for existing is the destruction of the State of Israel and the murder of Jewish people," but the group does not represent the Palestinian people.

" Hamas uses Palestinian civilians as human shields, and innocent Palestinian families are suffering greatly because of them," he said.

Biden also repeated U.S. intelligence analysis that a blast at a Gaza hospital was not caused by Israel.

"More than 1,300 people slaughtered in Israel, including at least 32 American citizens," Biden said, adding that "scores of innocents -- from infants to elderly grandparents, Israelis, Americans" -- [have been] taken hostage.

Advertisement

"As I told the families of Americans being held captive by Hamas, we're pursuing every avenue to bring their loved ones home," he said. "As president, there is no higher priority for me than the safety of Americans held hostage."

Meanwhile, Biden said, "Putin denies Ukraine has or ever had real statehood."

"He claims the Soviet Union created Ukraine," Biden said, adding, "If we don't stop Putin's appetite for power and control in Ukraine, he won't limit himself just to Ukraine."

Biden, who is the nation's second Catholic president, argued "America is a beacon to the world still."

"Tonight, there are innocent people all over the world who hope because of us, who believe in a better life because of us, who are desperate not to be forgotten by us, and who are waiting for us," he said. "But time is of the essence."

In an allusion to the ongoing and contentious debates in the House over electing a speaker, Biden continued, "I know we have our divisions at home. We have to get past them."

If the House fails to elect a Speaker -- or a temporary one -- U.S. ability to provide aid to both Israel and Ukraine could be stymied, as the chamber cannot conduct its usual business until the position is filled.

"We can't let petty, partisan, angry politics get in the way of our responsibilities as a great nation," he said. "We cannot and will not let terrorists like Hamas and tyrants

like Putin win. I refuse to let that happen."

"We have to remember who we are," he added. "We are the United States of America, the United States of America. And there is nothing -- nothing beyond our capacity if we do it together."