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Senate Blocks Effort to Halt Israel Arms Sales as More Democrats Voice Concern

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The U.S. Senate on Tuesday rejected Senator Bernie Sanders' resolutions aimed at stopping American arms sales to Israel, but the votes exposed growing unease among Democrats over the humanitarian toll of the conflict in Gaza.

Sanders, an independent from Vermont, introduced two measures seeking to block the transfer of \$675 million in bombs and 20,000 automatic rifles to Israel. While both were defeated, the proposals drew unusually strong support from within the Democratic caucus, signaling a shift in sentiment within the party.

Twenty-seven Democrats supported the resolution to block rifle sales, and 24 backed the resolution on bombs, a notable increase compared to earlier efforts, which typically drew support from fewer than 20 lawmakers.

Sanders argued that continued weapons shipments contradict U.S. values and risk making the country complicit in civilian harm. He pointed to widespread hunger and destruction in Gaza as key reasons for introducing the measures. “The United States cannot continue to support the Netanyahu government’s war machine with no conditions,” he said during the debate.

Republicans uniformly opposed the resolutions, citing Israel’s right to defend itself and the ongoing threat posed by Hamas. But several senior Democrats broke ranks. Senator Dick Durbin of Illinois, a longtime Israel supporter, described his vote as “painful” but necessary, stating that the scale of suffering in Gaza could no longer be ignored. Senator Elizabeth Warren and Senator Raphael Warnock also backed the measures, citing the moral imperative to act.

Senate Majority Leader Chuck Schumer opposed the resolutions but called for greater humanitarian aid for Palestinians. He insisted that U.S. military support for Israel benefits its people, not just its leadership, and urged renewed diplomatic efforts to ease the crisis.

Although the resolutions failed, some analysts viewed the vote as a turning point. With more than two dozen Democrats breaking with leadership, the outcome reflects a broader debate within the party about America's role in the conflict. Advocacy groups and some lawmakers argue that continued arms sales risk complicity in a deepening humanitarian crisis.

As the situation in Gaza remains dire, pressure is mounting on the White House and Congress to revisit the terms of U.S. military assistance to Israel, an issue likely to remain contentious in the months ahead.