

Send Comfort and Mercy to Gaza.



An Open Letter to President Biden on Sending Hospital Ships to Gaza

07 March 2024

Dear President Biden,

While I empathize with the challenges you face in dealing with the Gaza War, I have run out of patience with your administration and the Washington establishment over your collective refusal to mitigate the carnage in Gaza by deploying naval medical care assets to the Gaza coast.

Enough with useless ceasefire posturing and virtue signaling food drops; almost any country can do that. The United States must provide the mobile hospital capacity no other country can:

Send Comfort and Mercy to Gaza. Now!

Each of these battleship-sized floating hospitals can care for 1,300 patients. Each has a 100-bed ICU, surgical suites, birthing centers – everything the people of Gaza need to ease their suffering in a war that has not only wounded 100,000 of them but almost completely destroyed Gaza’s own medical facilities.

I am not the first to make this call. In the month following the Gaza War’s start, Johns Hopkins medical professor [Michael Rose](#) and a former *USS Comfort* commander [James Stavridis](#) called for their deployment. A few weeks later, [a bipartisan letter](#) from 55 members of Congress asked Defense Secretary Lloyd Austin to consider their deployment.

Your administration ignored them all. One ship sits in port on the West Coast after a months-long Pacific PR cruise; the other is steaming up the east coast to its Norfolk VA home port after upgrades in Alabama were finished. You sent bombs to Israel in less than 24 hours, yet in 151 days (and counting) you can’t send medical care to mitigate the carnage caused by those bombs? This is morally indefensible.

Worse, you didn’t even do the bare minimum when you had the chance – use the capabilities of the Navy and Marine strike group you sent to the eastern Mediterranean for the first three months of the war.

“You ordered Navy and Marine strike groups there for the first three months – a dozen ships, all of which can make 90,000 gallons of fresh water every day, all of which have top-shelf medical facilities and a mountain of medical supplies. The Bush administration deployed a similar force to Indonesia after the 2004 tsunami devastated the country. [Operation Unified Assistance](#) supported the traumatized people and collapsed infrastructure there – and majorly mitigated the effects of that disaster. Twenty years later, you did not order our magnificent navy into action to help Gaza the way President Bush helped Indonesia; you made them sit idly by while Gaza burned and children died – all while you sent more bombs to Israel. It is inexcusable. We have this enormous unrivaled ability to do good and yet you have done *nothing*. It is a war crime of omission if you do not immediately send Comfort and Mercy to Gaza.

Mr. President, your lack of action doesn't just fail the humanitarian test, either – Machiavelli would flunk you, too. Before the 2004 tsunami only 15 percent of Indonesians had a favorable view of America. After the tsunami, after *Operation Unified Assistance*, that number more than doubled, to 38 percent. So if you don't care enough about the people of Gaza to mitigate the carnage caused by US-made bombs, then at least send Comfort and Mercy to Gaza to reap the PR benefits for America.

Finally, and in the long term, most importantly, sending Comfort and Mercy to Gaza creates a small piece of neutral common ground upon which we can all stand in agreement. Right now, everyone is still screaming at each other, or demanding unworkable solutions to an intractable problem, or blaming everyone but themselves for the death and destruction – none of which matters to the people of Gaza who die every day from lack of medical care that We the People of the United States could provide. It's time to stop screaming, stop making pie-in-the-sky demands, stop blaming somebody – anybody – for this catastrophe and just *start helping*.

It begins with sending Comfort and Mercy to Gaza – now. Yes, there are some logistical and security challenges that come with parking those ships near the Gaza coast – and I'm sure your Defense Department apologists will trot those challenges as excuses for why Comfort and Mercy have not yet been sent to Gaza.

But *there is no excuse*: As you said in September 2022 and have repeated many times since then:

“The cynics and the critics tell us nothing can get done, but they are wrong. There is not a single thing America cannot do – not a single thing beyond our capacity if we do it together.”

Well, then, Mr. President, let's do *this* together:

Send Comfort and Mercy to Gaza – *now*.

Sincerely,



Robin Heid, M.A.
Candidate for Congress
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<https://www.msc.usff.navy.mil/Ships/Mercy/>

<https://www.msc.usff.navy.mil/Ships/Comfort/>



Robin Heid, M.A. is a candidate for the Third Congressional District seat in Colorado recently vacated by Rep. Lauren Boebert.