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In first, Israel sends 2,000 helmets, 500 flak jackets to Ukraine

*Вперше, Ізраїль відправив в Україну 2000 шоломів і 500  
бронезилетів*

*Ізраїль надіслав Україні шоломи та бронезилети, які, за словами Міноборони, будуть передані рятувальникам та цивільним організаціям. Допомога є ознакою зміни політики Ізраїлю щодо російського вторгнення після початкової спроби зберегти нейтралітет. Єрусалим прямо звинуватив росію у військових злочинах, оскільки в містах по всій країні були здійснені злочини росіянами.*

<https://www.timesofisrael.com/israel-sends-2000-helmets-500-flak-jackets-to-ukraine-rescue-organizations/>

In a further sign of its shifting stance on the Russian invasion of Ukraine, Israel on Wednesday sent Ukraine helmets and flak jackets that the Defense Ministry said will be given to rescue forces and civilian organizations.

In a statement, the ministry said it was shipping 2,000 helmets and 500 flak jackets — the first sent by the Jewish state since the Russian invasion began.

Since Russia invaded Ukraine on February 24, Jerusalem has tried to preserve its ties with Moscow and has until recently refused to send defensive equipment to Ukraine — instead sending over some 100 tons of humanitarian aid as well as setting up a field hospital in western Ukraine for six weeks.

However, the attempt to maintain a neutral stance has appeared to shift somewhat in recent weeks. Jerusalem agreed last month to send the helmets and flak jackets to emergency workers in Ukraine and explicitly accused Russia of war crimes as scenes of atrocities have emerged in towns and cities across the country.

Ties between Israel and Russia were further frayed following a claim by Russian Foreign Minister Sergey Lavrov that Adolf Hitler had Jewish heritage, in an attempt to defend Moscow's invasion of Ukraine as an attempt to "de-Nazify" a country whose president, Volodymyr Zelensky, is Jewish.

While the Prime Minister's Office later said that Russian President Vladimir Putin apologized to Prime Minister Naftali Bennett for the comments, the Kremlin did not confirm that an apology was issued.

Earlier this month it was reported that Israeli officials are expected to support sending Ukraine military aid, albeit at symbolic levels, and still with hopes of keeping the country's relationship with Russia intact; however, there has not been an announcement on the matter.

According to a diplomatic official, Israel will not consider sending offensive arms or advanced defensive technology, such as the Iron Dome anti-missile system, but will attempt to find equipment that can be donated without sparking a crisis with Moscow.

Zelensky and other Ukrainian officials have specifically mentioned Iron Dome as the top of their wish list for Israeli defensive equipment.

"Everybody knows that your missile defense systems are the best," he told the Knesset in March. "You can definitely help our people, save the lives of Ukrainians, of Ukrainian Jews."

Sending defensive arms would mark a sea change in Israel's approach to the war, though it would stop well short of the tanks, guns, planes and ammunition sent by the Europeans and Americans.

The reported move is being driven both by pressure from the US and other Western allies, which want Israel to back up its condemnations with actions, and by concerns that Israel's reluctance to more fully back Ukraine could hurt defense exports if countries fear Jerusalem will do the same to them in a time of need.

Israeli defense exports hit a record high of \$11.3 billion in 2021, according to Defense Ministry

figures released last month.