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DATA REPORT AUGUST 10, 2026

Was the Gaza Campaign Unrestrained Against an Undefended Population? Reading the Counts Each Party Publishes

Israel's own 2014 classification, an internal military database, a Lancet household survey and the Gaza health ministry tally, set side by side.

Gaza

Civilian Harm

Casualty Counts

Official Records

Discourse Measurement



Israel's own published account of the 2014 Gaza conflict classified at least 936 of the 2,125 Palestinians it counted as killed, 44%, as militants, a party's own count that records organized armed actors inside the population. For the current campaign, +972 Magazine, Local Call and the Guardian reported in 2025 on an internal Israeli military intelligence database indicating that 83% of those killed were civilians. The Gaza Ministry of Health reported 71,667 people killed as of 30 January 2026, and a population-representative household survey published in The Lancet Global Health in 2026 estimated 75,200 violent deaths through 5 January 2025. The phrase in the question describes a fight with armed force on one side only; the counts each party publishes about itself are where that description can be checked.

Key Findings

- Israel's published account of the 2014 Gaza conflict counted 2,125 Palestinians killed and classified at least 936 (44%) as militants, 761 (36%) as civilians and 428 (20%) as unclassified.
- +972 Magazine, Local Call and the Guardian reported in 2025 that an internal Israeli military intelligence database indicated a civilian share of 83% among those killed in the current campaign; the Guardian reported in September 2025 that the same data for the period since March indicated civilians were 15 of every 16 people killed.
- The Gaza Ministry of Health reported 71,667 killed as of 30 January 2026, as relayed by Reuters and CNN in 2026; the Times of Israel and the Jerusalem Post reported in 2026 that the Israeli military had briefed journalists on an internal estimate of about 70,000 Palestinians killed.
- The Gaza Mortality Survey, a population-representative household study published in The Lancet Global Health in 2026, estimated 75,200 violent deaths between 7 October 2023 and 5 January 2025.
- The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories recorded 1,778,363 metric tons of food entering Gaza between 10 October 2025 and 7 June 2026, a self-declared operational count by a party to the events.

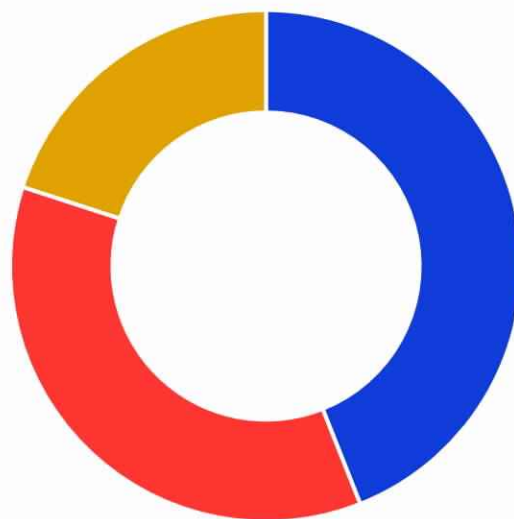
Was the campaign unrestrained against an undefended population?

It is often said that this is an unrestrained campaign against an undefended population.

Israel's own published account of the 2014 Gaza conflict counted 2,125 Palestinians killed and classified at least 936 of them, **44%**, as militants. That is the Israeli government's count on its own definitions, published by a party to the fighting, and it records organized armed actors living inside the population under question.

The same account classified 761 of the dead (36%) as civilians and left 428 (20%) unclassified at the time of publication. The residual matters as much as the two named categories: one fifth of the deaths in Israel's own tally were not assigned to either side.

How Israel's own account classified the 2,125 dead of the 2014 conflict



■ Identified as militants ■ Identified as civilians ■ Unclassified

Source: Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, published fatality classification for the 2014 Gaza conflict.

The current campaign produces the same structure with a different balance. +972 Magazine, Local Call and the Guardian reported in 2025 that an internal Israeli military intelligence

database indicated 83% of those killed were civilians, which leaves roughly one in six recorded in that database as a militant. The database is the Israeli military's own working record, reported by journalists who obtained it, not an independent reconstruction.

The population itself is not in dispute. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported in 2025 that roughly 2.2 million people were living in the Gaza Strip on the eve of the war and that nearly two million of them were displaced. The Israel Defense Forces Spokesperson stated on 29 February 2024 that over 13,000 people the military describes as terrorists had been eliminated in Gaza since the start of the war, again a party's own count using that party's own classification.

So the two Israeli records, a decade apart, describe combat with an armed opponent inside a dense civilian population, and both leave a large share of the dead identified as civilians. That is the frame in which every number below sits.

Is it true that most of those killed were civilians?

Yes, on the measured share that exists. +972 Magazine, Local Call and the Guardian reported in 2025 that an internal Israeli military intelligence database put the civilian share of the dead at **83%**. The figure comes from the Israeli military's own record-keeping rather than from an outside tally, which is what makes it usable as a concession rather than a contested estimate.

The Guardian reported in September 2025 that the same data, restricted to the period since March 2025, indicated civilians made up 15 of every 16 people killed, a share of about 94% for that window. The two readings are not the same measurement: one covers the campaign as recorded to the point of reporting, the other a later slice of it. Cite each with its window.

What that share can and cannot establish is itself a documented question. The Lieber Institute at West Point published an analysis in 2024 of what aggregate civilian-to-combatant ratios show in the Gaza conflict and what they do not, setting out that an aggregate ratio describes the outcome of a whole campaign and does not, on its own, establish the lawfulness or the targeting logic of any individual strike, and that such ratios are conventionally read against baselines from other urban wars rather than in isolation.

The 2014 Israeli account shows the same limit from the other direction. It reported 44% militants and 36% civilians and left 20% unassigned, so even the party doing the classifying published a fifth of its own count as undetermined. A single headline share, in either direction, is the end product of a classification process whose residual is rarely carried forward with it.

Both figures point one way. The share of the dead identified as civilians in the current campaign, as recorded in the Israeli military's own database and reported in 2025, is high, and it is higher than the share the same government published for the 2014 conflict.

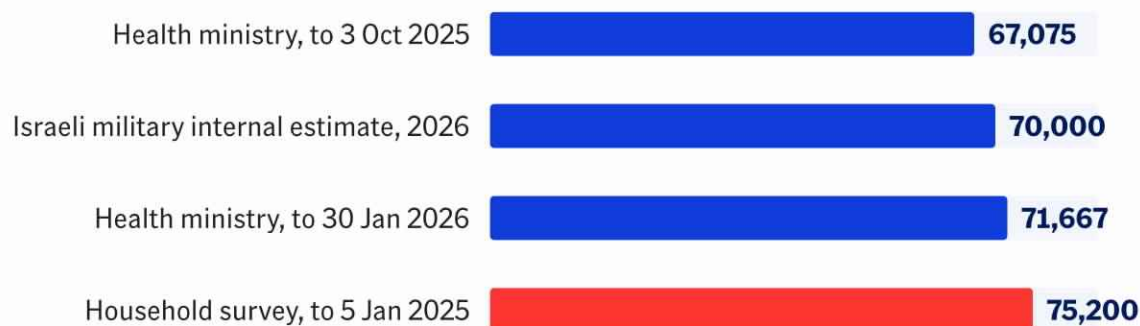
Which death tolls do the two parties themselves publish?

The Gaza Ministry of Health reported **71,667** people killed as of 30 January 2026, a figure relayed by Reuters and by CNN in 2026. It is the ministry's own count from its own records, produced by an authority that is a party to the events it counts, and it is not an independently verified total.

The Israeli figure is close to it. The Times of Israel and the Jerusalem Post both reported in 2026 that the Israel Defense Forces had briefed journalists on an internal estimate of about 70,000 Palestinians killed in the campaign. That is the Israeli military's own internal estimate as relayed by two named outlets, and it sits roughly 1,700 below the ministry total reported for the same period.

Earlier in the series, the Brown University Costs of War project reported in 2025 the Gaza Ministry of Health figures of 67,075 killed and 169,430 injured as of 3 October 2025, figures measured by the ministry rather than by the project relaying them. How different outlets and institutions handle these [published counts](#) is a separate matter from what each count measures.

Published totals for people killed in Gaza, by count and endpoint



Source: Gaza Ministry of Health figures as relayed by Brown University Costs of War (2025), Reuters (2026) and CNN (2026); Israeli military internal estimate as reported by the Times of Israel and the Jerusalem Post (2026); Gaza Mortality Survey, The Lancet Global Health (2026). Endpoints differ.

Israeli losses are counted by Israeli bodies on the same self-reported basis. The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies reported 1,664 Israelis confirmed killed and 17,809 wounded in the war as of 5 September 2024, including 1,184 killed on 7 October 2023 alone. No official body is credited in that report for the killed and wounded totals.

What does an independent household survey estimate?

The Gaza Mortality Survey, a population-representative household study published in The Lancet Global Health in 2026, estimated **75,200** violent deaths in the Gaza Strip between 7 October 2023 and 5 January 2025. It is the peer-reviewed tier of this record, and it measures something different from every administrative count above: deaths reported by sampled households rather than deaths registered by an authority.

The two methods diverge in a direction the method itself predicts. The survey's central estimate for a period ending 5 January 2025 is higher than the Gaza Ministry of Health total of 67,075 that the Brown University Costs of War project reported for 3 October 2025, nearly nine months later. A household survey captures deaths that never reached a registry, including those in areas where administrative recording broke down; a registry captures only what was recorded.

A survey estimate is not a count. It rests on a sample projected to a population, so it carries sampling error, and its accuracy also depends on the population denominator used at a

moment when that denominator was itself moving. The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported in 2025 that Gaza stood at about 2.13 million people at the end of 2025, a decline of approximately 254,000, which the bureau states is a decrease of 10.6% against pre-aggression population estimates, attributing the change to war-related deaths, missing persons, reduced births and forced out-migration. That is a demographic net change, not a casualty figure.

Neither the survey nor the ministry tally classifies the dead by combatant status. The Costs of War report also relays 169,430 injured as of 3 October 2025, again a ministry measurement. What the documentary record does and does not establish about [civilian harm in Gaza](#) has been examined separately.

So the independent estimate is higher than the administrative one for an earlier endpoint. Both are large, both are published with their methods stated, and they are not the same kind of number.

What does Israel's own record say about restraint measures?

The Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories recorded **1,778,363** metric tons of food entering the Gaza Strip between 10 October 2025 and 7 June 2026. That is COGAT's own operational record, a unit of Israel's Ministry of Defense and a party to the events it describes, and the tonnages rest on self-declaration by humanitarian organizations and private providers rather than on weighing at the crossings.

The other Israeli records run on the same basis and are stated as floors rather than exact totals.

Record and issuing body	What it states	Type
Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 16 December 2023	Over 70,000 tons of aid entered Gaza, including over 6,500 tons of medical supplies	Party's own count
Israel Defense Forces, 19 August 2025	Over 1.9 million tons of aid delivered since the start of the war, 7,800 tons of it by air	Party's own count
Israel Ministry of Foreign Affairs, 14 September 2025	More than 106,000 aid trucks entered Gaza carrying over two million tons	Party's own count

Record and issuing body	What it states	Type
COGAT, July 2026	More than 70,000 cubic meters of water per day facilitated, excluding local wells	Party's own count

The same ministry statement of 14 September 2025 reports 207 hostages returned or recovered, 148 alive and 59 deceased, with 48 remaining in captivity 712 days after the abduction. COGAT's July 2026 report also states 18,000 tons of medical supplies and medicines entering since the ceasefire began on 10 October 2025, and a decline of approximately 72% in the Gaza food consumer price index between September 2025 and May 2026, without identifying the source of the price data.

None of these figures is independently verified, and each is published by a party with an interest in the characterization it supports. What they establish is narrower than what they are often used to argue: that the Israeli government maintains, publishes and audits an operational record of aid volumes, target classifications and hostage status, and that the record it publishes describes measures it presents as constraints on the campaign. Whether those measures met any given legal or humanitarian standard is not settled by the volumes themselves, which are inputs and not outcomes.

Can a civilian-to-combatant ratio be verified during a war?

Israel's own account of the 2014 conflict left **428 of 2,125** dead, 20%, unclassified. That residual is the practical answer: even the party performing the classification, publishing after the fighting ended, could not assign a fifth of the deaths to either category, and the Lieber Institute at West Point set out in 2024 what an aggregate ratio can and cannot establish about conduct.

The Lieber Institute analysis states that an aggregate civilian-to-combatant ratio is a campaign-level outcome, not evidence about the proportionality of any individual attack, which turns on what was known and expected before each strike. It also notes that such ratios are read against baselines from other urban conflicts rather than against zero.

Beneath that sits a definitional divergence. The Israeli military maintains combatant lists on its own criteria, and the 83% civilian share reported in 2025 by +972 Magazine, Local Call

and the Guardian is a share derived from those criteria as recorded in the military's own database. The Gaza Ministry of Health totals relayed by Reuters and CNN in 2026 are not published with a combatant split at all. Two counts of the same dead can differ without either changing a name on a list.

What that dependence produces is visible in the arithmetic done on top of the totals. The Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs published in 2025 a ceiling of at most 41,000 civilian war-related deaths, derived by subtracting estimated natural deaths and Israel's own count of 21,000 Hamas fighters killed from the Gaza Ministry of Health total. The same page states that neither the total nor the fighter estimate has been independently confirmed. The result is a stated ceiling built from two inputs supplied by parties to the conflict, and it moves by tens of thousands with either input.

So the ratio cannot be settled from outside during the fighting. The three published attempts, Israel's 2014 classification, the internal database reported in 2025 and the Jerusalem Center's subtraction, each rest on a combatant definition held by one party, and each publishes a different share.

How does the defenceless-population framing appear in antisemitic comment corpora?

Becker, Ascone and Troschke measured 4,500 comments on the Facebook pages of leading British, French and German media outlets reacting to the May 2021 escalation, and found in their 2022 peer-reviewed study that **26.9%** of the 1,504 analyzed UK comments were antisemitic on an IHRA-based coding scheme.

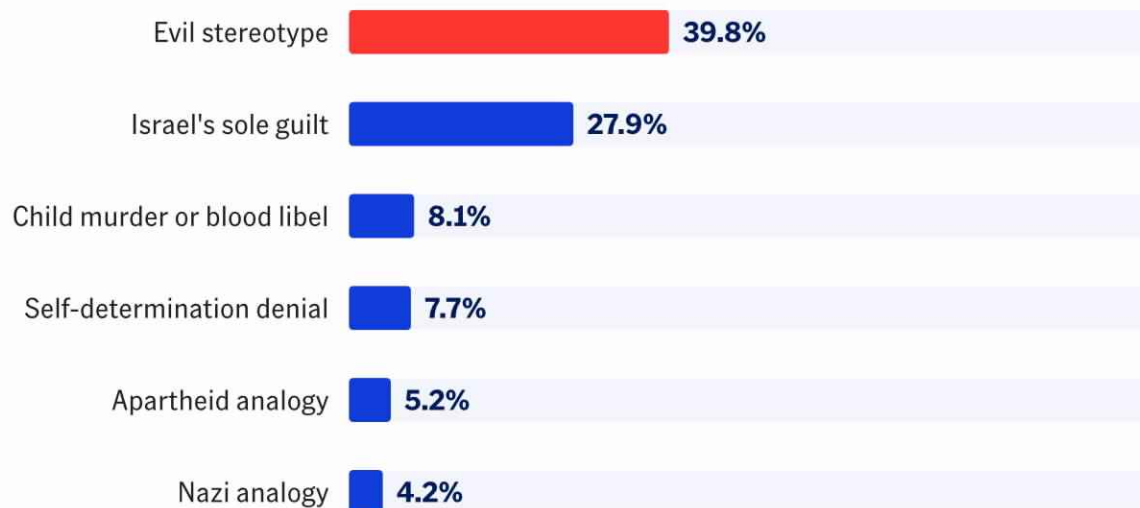
The comparable shares were 12.6% of 1,500 French comments and 13.6% of 1,520 German comments.

Within the UK antisemitic comments, the study coded the framings by type: the evil stereotype in 39.8%, Israel's sole guilt in 27.9%, child murder or blood libel in 8.1%, denial of Jewish self-determination in 7.7%, the apartheid analogy in 5.2% and the Nazi analogy in 4.2%. The categories are not exclusive and the reported items are the most frequent of a

longer scheme. The authors also report that thread context was needed to infer the antisemitic meaning in 38.7% of the UK antisemitic comments.

Framings coded within antisemitic UK comments on media Facebook pages

MAY 2021 ESCALATION; CATEGORIES ARE NON-EXCLUSIVE, TOP ITEMS ONLY



Source: Becker, Ascone and Troschke, 2022, peer-reviewed.

A second framing has been measured for its association with justification of aggression. Enstad, across two nationally representative surveys in Norway published in 2026 (Study 1, N = 1,575, and a preregistered replication, Study 2, N = 1,653), measured endorsement of Holocaust inversion, the belief that Israel treats Palestinians as badly as Jews were treated during the Second World War, and reported that in both studies endorsement was associated with justification of harassment and violence against Jews and with refusal to take a stance against such aggression. Endorsement was also associated with refusal to answer questions measuring blatant antisemitic prejudice. These are measured associations in survey data, not causal findings.

Does exposure to this conflict coincide with shifts in attitudes?

Huesmann, Dubow, Boxer, Souweidane and Ginges surveyed 89 Jewish American and 180 Arab American high-school students and reported in 2012 that total media exposure to the

Israeli-Palestinian conflict did not directly predict ethnic stereotypes; ethnic identity correlated with implicit out-group stereotyping at $r = -0.70$, and the association with media ran through identification with the groups as portrayed rather than through exposure itself.

Both groups in that study held more negative stereotypes about the out-group than the in-group. The authors present the pathway as an association measured in a cross-sectional adolescent sample, not as a demonstration that media exposure produces prejudice.

Ozer, Obaidi and Bergh ran two experiments with British samples, Study 1 with $N = 354$ and Study 2 with $N = 490$, priming participants with war-in-Gaza material and measuring hostility toward Jews and other ethnic groups. Their 2025 peer-reviewed paper reports two distinct routes: political orientation associated with anti-Jewish hostility through social dominance orientation, and conservative political orientation associated negatively with antisemitism through out-group identity fusion with the Palestinian people, an identity-based pathway that the authors describe as conflating attitudes toward Israel with prejudice toward Jews.

The two studies measure different populations at different moments and agree on structure rather than magnitude: what moves with the conflict is not raw exposure but identification, and the association appears on more than one ideological route. Whether measured antisemitism rises in the aftermath of conflict episodes, and by how much in which recording systems, has been examined separately in [research on the post-conflict period](#).

Neither study measures conduct in Gaza, and neither speaks to the casualty record above. They measure how attitudes toward Jews move alongside exposure to the conflict, in named samples, with the authors' own caveats on inference carried forward.

Methodology and limitations

This report measures the published record behind a contested characterization. It does not assess the lawfulness of the campaign or the truth of the characterization; it sets out what each named body counted, when, and on whose definitions.

Five source types appear. Party-own operational records: Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs, the Israel Defense Forces and COGAT publish aid tonnages, hostage counts, target classifications and, for the 2014 conflict, a fatality classification. Each is produced by a party to the events, none is independently verified, and several are stated as floors ("over 1.9 million tons") that may not be restated as exact totals. The Gaza Ministry of Health total is the same kind of record from the other party.

Peer-reviewed measurement: the Gaza Mortality Survey in The Lancet Global Health (2026), Becker, Ascone and Troschke (2022), Enstad (2026), Ozer, Obaidi and Bergh (2025) and Huesmann and colleagues (2012). Survey estimates carry sampling error and are projections from samples, not counts. The Norwegian, British and American attitude studies are correlational; none establishes cause, and the reports here mirror the authors' own caveats.

Press reporting of a primary document: the 83% civilian share and the 15-of-16 figure come from +972 Magazine, Local Call and the Guardian in 2025, reporting an internal Israeli military intelligence database. The underlying database is not public, so those figures are carried as those outlets reported them.

Analytical commentary: the Lieber Institute at West Point (2024) and the Jerusalem Center for Security and Foreign Affairs (2025). The Jerusalem Center's 41,000 ceiling is that publisher's own arithmetic on inputs supplied by parties to the conflict, and its page states that neither input has been independently confirmed.

Three limits bind the whole record. Endpoints differ across counts, so the totals in this report are not a time series and must be cited with their dates. No combatant classification of the current dead exists from any body that is not a party to the fighting. And the 2014 classification describes a different operation a decade earlier; it is used here for what it shows about how the Israeli government has itself categorized fatalities, not as a proxy for the current campaign.

Conclusion

The question asks whether this is an unrestrained campaign against an undefended population. On the records the two parties publish about themselves, the second half of that

phrase does not match what either party records: Israel's own 2014 account identified 44% of the dead as militants, its internal database as reported in 2025 identified roughly one in six the same way, and its Spokesperson stated on 29 February 2024 that over 13,000 people the military classifies as terrorists had been killed.

The first half of the phrase is where the record is heaviest, and it does not soften. The civilian share in the Israeli military's own database was reported at 83%, and at 15 of every 16 for the months after March 2025. The Gaza Ministry of Health reported 71,667 killed by 30 January 2026 and the Israeli military's internal estimate, as relayed in 2026, sat about 1,700 below it, so the two parties' totals for the same war now agree within roughly 2%. A household survey published in The Lancet Global Health in 2026 estimated 75,200 violent deaths by 5 January 2025, above the administrative tally for a date nine months later. Israel publishes an operational record of restraint measures running to 1,778,363 metric tons of food across eight months of ceasefire, and it publishes that record itself.

What the framing does after it leaves the casualty tables is a separate measured matter. Becker, Ascone and Troschke found 26.9% of UK comments on media coverage of the 2021 escalation antisemitic, with Israel's sole guilt coded in 27.9% of those; Enstad found endorsement of Holocaust inversion associated, across two Norwegian national samples, with justification of harassment and violence against Jews. A description of a war as one-sided is also a description of who is blameless and who is not, and that second reading travels further than the first.

Which leaves the question worth sitting with. When the numbers the two parties publish converge to within a couple of percent, and the language used to describe them does not converge at all, which of the two is doing the work in what people come to believe about Jews?

Frequently Asked Questions

How many Israelis were killed in the war?

The Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies reported 1,664 Israelis confirmed killed and 17,809 wounded in the war as of 5 September 2024, including 1,184 killed on the single day of

7 October 2023. The report credits no official body for the killed and wounded totals, so they are carried as that institute's running figures.

How many hostages has Israel reported returned?

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs stated on 14 September 2025 that 207 hostages had returned or been recovered, 148 alive and 59 deceased, with 48 remaining in captivity, living and deceased, 712 days after the abduction. These are Israel's own point-in-time counts and carry that date.

How many people in Gaza were displaced?

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported in 2025 that roughly 2.2 million people were living in Gaza on the eve of the war and that nearly two million of them were displaced, with roughly 100,000 having left the Strip. Displacement is counted separately from the bureau's net population change.

How does the current toll compare with the 2014 conflict?

Israel's published account of the 2014 Gaza conflict counted 2,125 Palestinians killed. The Gaza Ministry of Health total of 71,667 reported as of 30 January 2026, relayed by Reuters and CNN, is roughly 34 times that figure, though the two counts come from different bodies using different definitions.

What figure did the Palestinian statistical authority report for deaths in Gaza?

The Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics reported 70,942 deaths in Gaza by the end of December 2025, attributing the figure to the Palestinian Ministry of Health rather than measuring it itself. The bureau's own reporting for that period covers demographic change, not casualty counting.

What did Israel report about aid in the first months of the war?

Israel's Ministry of Foreign Affairs reported that over 70,000 tons of aid had entered Gaza as of 16 December 2023, including over 6,500 tons of medical supplies, with over 750 patients exiting for care overseas and approximately 9,500 foreign nationals and dual citizens

evacuated with Israeli assistance. All are the ministry's own cumulative counts and are stated as floors.

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Does Antisemitism Rise After Conflict?

Antisemitic expression rises alongside conflict, not necessarily from it: the October 7 spike hit within minutes, with parallel rises around earlier flashpoints.



The Hanover Institute for Public Policy studies the inputs fueling antisemitism in the United States and publishes what the evidence shows. Its work is content analysis, computational social science, and other data-driven research, and its reports take no policy positions.

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