

Progressives Break with Biden Over His Uncritical Support for Israel

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With the outbreak of renewed fighting between Israel and Hamas on May 10, leading to scores of deaths, including of children, President Joseph Biden, like all U.S. presidents before him, expressed his support for Israel, stating that Israel has a right to defend itself from Hamas' rockets. But he failed to even mention the plight of the Palestinians, fueling a growing opposition to his policy from Democratic Party progressives. Democratic congressional representatives and progressive NGOs have strongly criticized the Biden administration for its failure to recognize the Palestinians' rights and to express sympathy with their situation. For the first time, the Democrats face a small but determined group within the party who demand a break from unconditional support for Israel and support for Palestinian rights.

Joseph Biden is following a long-established pattern of virtually uncritical U.S. support for Israel, but today that position is being challenged. Palestinian Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, speaking in Congress declared, "To read the statements from President Biden, Secretary of State Anthony Blinken, General Lloyd Austin and leaders of both parties, you would hardly know Palestinians existed at all." She went on, "There has been no recognition of the attack on Palestinian families being ripped from their homes right now. No mention of children being detained or murdered. No recognition of a sustained campaign of harassment and terror by Israeli police against worshippers kneeling down and praying and celebrating the holiest days in one of their holiest places, no mention of Al-Aqsa being surrounded by violence, tear gas, smoke, while people pray."

Tlaib added: "If our own State Department can't even bring itself to acknowledge the killing of Palestinian children is wrong, well, I will say it for the millions of Americans who stand with me against the killing of innocent children, no matter their ethnicity, or faith," she added.

Twenty-five House Democrats signed a letter calling on Blinken to condemn the threatened evictions of Palestinians from homes in Jerusalem's Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood living on land claimed by Jewish nationalists, one of the issues that has sparked the recent violence in Palestine/Israel. Congresswoman Marie Newman, an author of the letter, stated, "Palestinian families have every right to live safely in their homes. That's why I've led my colleagues in a letter calling on the State Department to immediately condemn these heinous actions by the Israeli government against Palestinian families in East Jerusalem. America must defend human rights everywhere."

Representative Betty McCollum has introduced a bill in the House that says that Israel may not use U.S. taxpayer funding for actions that violate the rights of Palestinians. "U.S. assistance intended for Israel's security should foster peace and must never be used to violate the human rights of children, demolish the homes of Palestinian families, or to permanently annex Palestinian lands."

Senator Bernie Sanders wrote in a *New York Times* opinion piece, "...Israel remains the one sovereign authority in the land of Israel and Palestine, and rather than preparing for peace and justice, it has been entrenching its unequal and undemocratic control....Over more than a decade of his right-wing rule in Israel, Mr. Netanyahu has cultivated an increasingly intolerant and authoritarian type of racist nationalism....In the Middle East, where we provide nearly \$4 billion a year in aid to Israel, we can no longer be apologists for the right-wing Netanyahu government and its undemocratic and racist behavior."

In addition to the politicians, 150 NGOs that deal with foreign policy but also with immigration, the environment, racism, and many other issues have also called upon Biden to change his position. The Democratic Socialists of America and other U.S left groups have long been supporters of Palestinian rights.