

Trump denounces Jews for “disloyalty” if they do not vote for him

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“I think any Jewish people that vote for a Democrat, I think it shows either a total lack of knowledge or great disloyalty,” President Donald Trump said Tuesday.

After this remark sparked widespread outrage and condemnation from Jewish groups, who pointed out that the charge of “disloyalty” echoed longstanding anti-Semitic attacks, Trump deliberately repeated his comment on Wednesday, in a slightly modified form. “If you want to vote Democrat, you are being very disloyal to Jewish people and very disloyal to Israel,” he said.

The argument in both cases was the same: Jewish voters owe political loyalty to the state of Israel, which is aligned with Trump; if they vote for Democrats (i.e., against Trump), they are betraying Israel. The real thrust, of course, is that Jewish voters are betraying Trump—a clear incitement of Trump’s fascist and white supremacist supporters to avenge themselves against such Jews.

As in his “jokes” about canceling the 2020 elections and ruling indefinitely through a third or fourth presidential term, Trump is pursuing a calculated strategy of provocation, not merely blurting out comments that seem to border on insanity, as most American media outlets have chosen to portray this episode.

Trump is not seeking to win Jewish votes in the 2020 election through such statements. If anything, the blatant anti-Semitism of his remarks would lead to an even greater rejection of his presidency in 2020 than in 2016, when some 71 percent of Jewish voters cast ballots for Hillary Clinton against 23 percent for Trump. In 2018, when the Democrats recaptured the House of Representatives, the anti-Trump majority among Jewish voters was even larger: 79 percent voted for Democratic candidates and only 17 percent for

Republicans.

If there is an electoral component to these comments, it is that Trump is continuing his effort to target four Democratic congresswomen, all elected in heavily minority districts and all themselves from minority communities: Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Ayanna Pressley, Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar. Trump has sought to identify the four as the real face of the Democratic Party and used them as hate objects at his campaign rallies, where he vilifies them as socialists and has called on them to “go back where they came from.”

Last week, Trump prevailed on the Israeli government to reverse itself and bar Tlaib and Omar from entering the country to visit Tlaib’s Palestinian grandmother, who lives on the West Bank, and to hold discussions with Palestinian Arabs on the West Bank and in East Jerusalem.

On Tuesday, Trump took the occasion of a joint press conference with the visiting president of Romania to launch into another diatribe, responding to a press conference held by Tlaib and Omar the previous day in Omar’s Minneapolis congressional district. There Omar called on congressional Democrats to reconsider the scale of US military and financial aid to Israel in the light of the Israeli government’s unprecedented refusal to allow elected US government officials—herself and Tlaib—to enter the country.

Trump repeated the slander that Tlaib and Omar hate Jews and he denounced congressional Democrats for opposing their exclusion from Israel. “The concept of even talking about this ... of cutting off aid to Israel because of two people that hate Israel and hate Jewish people, I can’t believe we’re even having this conversation,” Trump said.

“Where has the Democratic Party gone?” he

continued. “Where have they gone ... where they're defending these two people over the state of Israel?” And he proceeded to make the remark quoted above condemning any Jew who voted for the Democrats as disloyal.

But beyond the electoral considerations, Trump is seeking to stoke up Christian fundamentalist and white supremacist supporters against his political opponents, first of all in the Democratic Party, but more broadly as opposition emerges from below, from the working class. He is deliberately paving the way for political violence.

Virtually every national Jewish organization, with the exception of the Republican Jewish Coalition, has denounced Trump's comments and, in some cases, characterized them as an incitement to violence.

Rabbi Alissa Wise, deputy director of Jewish Voice for Peace, said in a press statement, “Trump's accusations of 'dual-loyalty'—a centuries-old anti-Semitic charge against Jews beginning in Christian Europe—with regard to the American Jewish community and the Democratic party are appalling.” She added, “His fake concern for Jews doesn't fool us, as his actions have proven he is not concerned about Jewish safety but is using Jews to win political points with his white nationalist base.”

“American Jews—like all Americans—have a range of political views and policy priorities,” David Harris, CEO of the American Jewish Committee, said in a statement. “His assessment of their knowledge or ‘loyalty,’ based on their party preference, is inappropriate, unwelcome, and downright dangerous.”

Jonathan Greenblatt, chief executive of the Anti-Defamation League, said that “charges of disloyalty have long been used to attack Jews.” In a television appearance Wednesday morning, he called Trump's remarks anti-Semitic.

A spokesman for the liberal Jewish group J Street said, “It is dangerous and shameful for President Trump to attack the large majority of the American Jewish community as unintelligent and ‘disloyal’ ... But it is no surprise that the president's racist, disingenuous attacks on progressive women of color in Congress have now transitioned into smears against Jews.”

IfNotNow, a Jewish group that has organized protests around the country against Trump's immigration

policies, told *Newsweek*, “this is an explicit dual loyalty charge wielded by the President of the United States against 80% of American Jews who voted against him. It is not an antisemitic dog whistle—it's a bullhorn to his white nationalist base.”

Only a few days ago, Jewish protesters organized by IfNotNow came under attack outside an Immigration and Customs Enforcement detention center in Rhode Island. An ICE employee rammed his pickup truck into the demonstrators, sending several to the hospital. Lou Dobbs of Fox News, a leading Trump cheerleader, later commented that they “had it coming.”

Congressional Democrats also denounced Trump's comments, but they have played the same game, passing a resolution earlier this year condemning comments made by Representative Omar about the political influence of the Zionist lobby in Washington. The Democratic Party, like the Republican, is a firm supporter of the vast financial subsidy paid by the US government to the Israeli government, the most important military-security ally of American imperialism in the Middle East.

While Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu said nothing, Trump's remarks were so brazen that Israeli President Reuven Rivlin called the top Democrat in Washington, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, to assure her that the state of Israel did not see its ties with the United States as “dependent on the relationship with one particular party.” Reuven's office released a statement that did not mention Trump by name but said that the phone call to Pelosi came “against the backdrop of recent events.”



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