

House censures Gosar while Republicans defend fascist threats

Patrick Martin

17 November 2021

The US House of Representatives voted by 223 to 207 Wednesday afternoon to censure Representative Paul Gosar for his public threat of violence against Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez. The resolution also stripped the Arizona Republican of all his committee assignments.

Only two Republicans voted for censure, and one voted “present.” Every Republican who spoke in the hour-long debate before the censure vote defended Gosar and denounced the decision of the Democratic leadership to take action against him.

Gosar provoked the censure motion nine days ago by posting on his official Twitter account an edited video that depicted him killing Ocasio-Cortez with a sword and then brandishing the weapon in the face of President Biden. More than three million people viewed the anime video before Gosar was compelled to take it down.

The video was a version of the popular Japanese anime series “Attack on Titan,” with the faces of Gosar and other fascist Republican representatives, Marjorie Taylor Greene and Matt Gaetz, superimposed on human heroes, while the faces of Ocasio-Cortez and Biden were superimposed on the monsters they were fighting.

The clips from the edited anime in which Gosar kills Ocasio-Cortez were interspersed with video footage of immigrants crossing the US-Mexico border and being rounded up by the Border Patrol. In the crude and racist distortion of reality embraced by Gosar, immigrants were depicted as monsters attacking innocent Americans. His program for dealing with them was indicated by blood spattering the frames depicting the migrants.

Democrats during the debate underscored the unprecedented character both of Gosar’s actions and the decision by the Republican Party to defend them.

One pointed out that in a work place or a school, someone posting a video of himself killing a co-worker or a fellow student would be fired, detained or sent to a

mental institution. Another noted that the House Republicans were discussing stripping committee positions from the 13 Republicans who had voted for the recently passed infrastructure bill, but objected to a similar penalty for a congressman who broadcast a death threat.

When his turn came in the censure debate, Gosar doubled down on his racist and fascist politics in a two-minute speech. After a perfunctory, “for the record” statement that he did not advocate violence, he went on to describe immigrants as the “enemy.”

“Our country is suffering from the plague of illegal immigration,” he said. “I don’t stop pointing this out, nor will I. Millions of illegal aliens and human traffickers are being let in and moved around our country in the dead of night, condoned by this administration.”

Other Republicans downplayed the threat of violence or described it as a joke or something that could be dismissed because it appeared in a cartoon. Presumably, if Gosar had tweeted out a cartoon showing hook-nosed Jews or portraying African-Americans as apes and monkeys, in the style of Nazi or Ku Klux Klan propaganda, they would have applied the same standard.

The most telling comments came from House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, whose speech was a lengthy diversion touching on everything from immigration to inflation, the Biden spending bills, the trial of Kyle Rittenhouse and various procedural wrangles with the House Democrats, but never addressing the mounting danger of political violence or the significance of Gosar’s actions in that context.

It is well known that McCarthy called the White House during the January 6 attack and pleaded with Trump to call off his supporters then rampaging through the halls of Congress, only to be told by Trump that they cared more about the election than he, McCarthy, did. Later, during the debate on impeaching Trump, McCarthy

acknowledged that Trump bore responsibility for the January 6 attack. Since then, he has backpedaled frantically, seeking to restore himself to the good graces of the would-be dictator, who has tightened his grip on the Republican Party.

In Wednesday's debate, McCarthy spoke aggressively and sarcastically, seemingly buoyed by recent polls showing that the Republicans will likely take control of the House in the 2022 elections. He all but promised that outspoken Democrats like Ocasio-Cortez and Ilhan Omar—who have never threatened to kill anyone—would face penalties similar to those imposed on Gosar.

House Democratic leaders who spoke in the debate, including Speaker Nancy Pelosi and Majority Leader Steny Hoyer, made it clear that they had been forced to take action because the House Republican leadership had done nothing.

Minority Leader McCarthy did not even issue a statement about Gosar for a week, and a meeting of the House Republican Conference decided to take no action after Gosar made an obviously rehearsed and insincere declaration that he had not intended any harm to Ocasio-Cortez and had taken down the video.

Some statements by Democrats during the debate, however, and the relative speed of the response, compared to earlier actions against Iowa Republican Steve King in 2017 and Georgia Republican Marjorie Taylor Greene earlier this year, suggest that there was concern over an imminent threat of violence against the New York representative.

One of the committee assignments taken away from Gosar is the Oversight Committee, where Ocasio-Cortez is one of the Democratic members, meaning that she would be meeting behind closed doors with someone who is a gun enthusiast and had threatened her life.

Although she has been the recipient of countless death threats from the ultra-right, particularly in the past year, when Ocasio-Cortez addressed the House during the debate she appeared clearly shaken by the events of the past 10 days.

She denounced the speech by McCarthy opposing censure, saying, "It is a sad day in which a member who leads a political party in the United States of America cannot bring themselves to say that issuing a depiction of murdering a member of Congress is wrong, and instead decides to venture off into a tangent about gas prices and inflation. What is so hard, what is so hard about saying that this is wrong?"

The remainder of her remarks, however, underscored

the Democrats' opposition to any serious political response to the threat of right-wing violence. Ocasio-Cortez claimed that opposition to violence was "where we must draw the line independent of party or belief."

Like every Democrat who spoke in the debate before and after her, Ocasio-Cortez did not address the political basis for the mounting threat of violence: the increasing transformation of the Republican Party into a fascistic instrument of ex-president Trump to pursue the political agenda of big business through the methods displayed in the January 6 attack on the Capitol.

Representative Gosar is not just a 63-year-old ignoramus and reactionary who believes that using anime cartoons will enable him to reach American youth with his fascist filth. He has the closest political connections to organized groups of right-wing thugs, including the Proud Boys and Oath Keepers, and met with them repeatedly during the run-up to the January 6 attack. He was the featured speaker last July at a gathering of "America First" fascists headed by the white supremacist Nick Fuentes. His threats of violence must be taken seriously because he has direct ties to those who would seek to carry them out.

Any serious investigation of the attack on the Capitol would put Gosar and a dozen other Republican representatives and senators in the dock, compelled to answer questions under oath about what they knew and what they did to assist the attack on the Capitol, whose goal was to block congressional certification of Biden's election victory. The fact that the House Select Committee on January 6 has not asked for their testimony is a sure sign that it is a whitewash.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact