

DSA National Political Committee rejects calls to expel Jamaal Bowman for supporting Israeli war crimes

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5 December 2021

Over the last several months, the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) has been embroiled in an internal controversy over the actions of New York Democratic Congressman and DSA member Jamaal Bowman.

On September 25, Bowman voted to provide the Israeli military with \$1.1 billion for its Iron Dome armament program in addition to the \$3.3 billion in Israeli military funding that Bowman previously voted for in July. Less than two weeks after his second Iron Dome vote, Bowman traveled to Israel and visited with far-right Israeli Prime Minister Naftali Bennett as part of a Democratic Party delegation.

Bowman's open solidarization with Israeli war crimes provoked criticism from a section of DSA members, who began circulating a petition calling for his expulsion from the DSA.

After a drawn-out process of "discussions" with Bowman, the DSA National Political Committee (NPC) issued a statement on December 2 declaring that they would not expel him.

The NPC statement began by acknowledging what amounts to an endorsement by one of its members of war crimes. It stated that "there is no excuse for Rep. Bowman's decision to increase funding for the Israeli military when he previously committed to cut U.S. military aid and arms sales to countries carrying out systematic human rights violations, nor for his participation in a propaganda trip to Israel, which aims to legitimize an apartheid state."

Regarding Bowman's photo-op with Bennett, the NPC wrote that the Israeli prime minister was "an unapologetic racist and war criminal who has infamously said, 'I have killed lots of Arabs in my

life—and there is no problem with that.'"

All of this is merely prefatory to the NPC's conclusion that no disciplinary measures would be taken. The statement went on to provide a series of excuses for actions just declared "inexcusable."

The NPC first justified the rottenness of Bowman by referring to the rottenness of other politicians backed by the DSA. "Bernie Sanders," they wrote, "who DSA endorsed twice, has headlined high profile J Street [an Israeli lobby] conferences, and has not adopted DSA's line on Palestine."

One might add, though the NPC does not, that Sanders has compiled a lengthy record of defending American imperialism, including support for the 1993 US intervention in the Somalian civil war, the NATO air war against Serbia in 1999, and the 2001 invasion of Afghanistan. In his last run for president, Sanders said he felt "some wars are necessary." In a 2014 town hall meeting, Sanders infamously shouted down an antiwar protester who challenged his support for Israel even as it was in the midst of committing egregious crimes against the Palestinian population.

The NPC then proceeded to assure DSA members concerned about Bowman's actions that he was displaying "considerable movement" and that he "could play a vital role in the fight for Palestinian liberation by linking it to liberation movements closer to home." The statement placed emphasis on the fact that Bowman is black, in line with the Democratic Party and the DSA's promotion of identity politics to divide the working class.

The NPC omitted Bowman's most relevant statement in this regard, namely his praise for American war criminal Colin Powell after his death in October: "As a

Black man just trying to figure out the world, Colin Powell was an inspiration. ... Rest in power, sir.”

Thus, we are left with the conclusion that, while Bowman may have committed grievous “errors” in helping provide billions of dollars to the Israeli military to slaughter Palestinian workers and youth, and while he has solidarized himself with a war criminal, DSA members should rest assured that he is shifting his views.

The DSA statement was preceded by an article in *Jacobin* magazine on November 24, which, if anything, is even more brazen in its sophistry. The article, titled “No, DSA shouldn’t expel Rep. Jamaal Bowman” by Hadas Thier, argues that DSA members “have to recognize that we’re still in a relatively weak position” and therefore expelling Bowman would hurt the DSA because it would distance the organization from the political establishment.

“A knee-jerk response,” it continued, would be “to write off or expel political allies who don’t completely line up with us [which] will confine us to the continued marginality of purity politics.” One might ask the editors at *Jacobin*: If not open support for Israeli war crimes, what would a member of Congress have to do to justify expulsion from this ostensibly socialist organization?

When *Jacobin* speaks of “purity politics,” they have in mind any actual commitment to socialist principles, of which *Jacobin* has none. Their concern over “marginality” is not over being “marginalized” from the broad mass of the population but rather from being cut off from access to positions within the political establishment.

It continued, “The fact that both Bowman and AOC continue to meet with and engage with DSA and other activist organizations is a testament to the fact that they value these relationships and their political positions.” That is, it does not matter that Bowman supports Israeli war crimes and American imperialism, so long as he is still “in discussion” with the DSA.

“National political figures like Bowman or AOC may be members of DSA, but their affiliations are loose,” it stated. “Neither will depend on [the] DSA to win reelection.” If this is the case, then what precisely is the DSA doing? Its entire political strategy is premised on the false claim that it can help push the Democratic Party to the left, by electing individuals like Bowman

and Ocasio-Cortez.

But when these figures do what they inevitably will and expose their right-wing role, *Jacobin* throws up its hands and says: Well, there is nothing we can do, we are too small, and they don’t depend on us. Let’s not frighten them away.

This is because in reality the DSA is not seeking to “pressure” the Democratic Party to do anything, but rather it is seeking to channel young people and workers back into the Democratic Party and shore up support for capitalism and imperialism. In exchange for services rendered, the DSA leadership, comprised of and speaking for privileged sections of the upper middle class, is looking for “a seat at the table,” i.e., positions and, most importantly, financial resources.



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