

Newt Gingrich threatens January 6 committee members with imprisonment

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In an interview this past Sunday with Maria Bartiromo of Fox News, former Republican Speaker of the House Newt Gingrich accused congressional members of the US House Select Committee on the January 6 Attack investigating Trump's attempted coup of being criminals and threatened them with jail time should Republicans retake the House of Representatives in the 2022 midterm elections.

Comparing the legally constituted panel to a "lynch mob," Gingrich complained to the far-right news host Bartiromo that Attorney General Merrick Garland and the select committee have "run amok."

"They are breaking the rules. They are going after people in a way which reminiscent of the British monarchy using closed-door systems that we outlawed deliberately because we had seen it and we knew what it was like," claimed Gingrich without citing a single example or offering any evidence.

Repeating the well-worn talking points of Trump's fascist co-conspirators in Congress, such as Marjorie Taylor Greene (R-GA), Matt Gaetz (R-FL) and Paul Gosar (R-AZ), who have repeatedly defended the far-right Trump supporters who have been arrested for their participation in the coup, Gingrich added: "They are running over peoples' civil liberties."

Threatening retribution, Gingrich, who is reportedly advising current House Minority Leader Kevin McCarthy, warned that "all these people who have been so tough and so mean and so nasty will be delivered subpoenas for every document, every conversation, every tweet, every email."

Just over a year after Trump-aligned fascist paramilitaries came within moments of capturing and/or killing Democratic politicians in the failed coup, Gingrich mused: "I think when you have a Republican Congress, this is all going to come crashing down and

the wolves will find out that they are now sheep..."

Echoing frequent chants at Trump rallies to "lock up" his "enemies," Gingrich concluded: "and they are the ones who are in fact, I think, face a risk of jail for the kind of laws they are breaking."

In addition to serving as speaker of the house for five years, Gingrich was a Republican representative from Georgia for 20 years. His threats to jail members of Congress are a warning to the working class that growing sections of the ruling class are prepared to dispense with the 200-year-old norms of American democracy and embrace fascistic forms of rule.

There is no doubt if Republicans gain control of the House of Representatives they will abolish the select committee, rescind any subpoenas or lawsuits and halt any further investigations into Trump's failed coup. Gingrich's threats, however, indicate the Republicans would be willing to go much further, aligning themselves openly with what Trump and his far-right paramilitaries started on January 6.

In response to Gingrich, a 2012 Republican candidate for president, threatening congressional members with prosecution for carrying out their constitutionally mandated duties, the Democrats for the most part left it up to far-right Rep. Liz Cheney, one of only two Republicans on the select committee, to defend its activities and draw attention to the gravity of the threats leveled by Gingrich.

"A former Speaker of the House is threatening jail time for members of Congress who are investigating the violent January 6 attack on our Capitol and our Constitution," Cheney tweeted on January 23. "This is what it looks like when the rule of law unravels."

Asked to respond to Gingrich's menacing remarks in an interview with CNN's Jim Acosta on Sunday, Rep. Zoe Lofgren (D-CA), a member of the select

committee, downplayed the threats.

“That’s just bizarre. I think Newt has really lost it ... It leaves me speechless,” she responded.

Hinting at a reality that was moments from materializing on January 6, Lofgren added: “Unless he is assuming that the government does get overthrown and there is no system of justice. There’s just random arrests...”

Lofgren qualified that statement quickly, reiterating: “I mean it’s just a bizarre statement. And he looks terrible.”

As of this writing, no other prominent Democrat, including President Joe Biden, House Speaker Nancy Pelosi, Vermont Sen. Bernie Sanders or leading “left” Democrat Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez had spoken out against Gingrich’s threats. In fact, Lofgren herself did not even bother to share her CNN interview on Twitter, demonstrating the Democrats’ determination to bury the true extent of the fascist threat following January 6.

The Democrats remain silent on the ongoing revelations of the January 6 committee, particularly the draft executive order drawn up by Trump’s lawyers on the eve of the attack on Congress ordering the military to seize ballots and voting machines and install Trump as president-dictator.

But Trump’s fascist allies hailed Gingrich’s remarks. In a Monday appearance on former Trump adviser Steve Bannon’s War Room Pandemic podcast, fascist Florida Rep. Matt Gaetz vociferously declared his agreement. He declared, “[Y]ou know what, Newt’s Right! We are going to take power!”

Using a homophobic slur, Gaetz added, “And it’s not going to be the days of Paul Ryan and Trey Gowdy where Republicans go limp wristed, where they lose their backbone and fail to send a single subpoena. No it’s going to be the days of Jim Jordan and Matt Gaetz and Marjorie Taylor-Greene and you know what we are going to get answers.”

Gaetz launched into a series of fascist conspiracy theories, demanding “Real answers about what happened in the election, answers about the Wuhan Institute of Virology and certainly answers about a Department of Justice and a national security apparatus.”

As Biden and the Democrats seek to lull the working class to the very real danger of a fascist government taking power in the US, the Republicans continue to go

on the offensive against their political opponents. A day after Gingrich leveled his threats, the newly elected Republican state attorney general in Virginia, Jason Miyares, fired the top lawyer at the University of Virginia from his position for his role in leading the January 6 investigation.

On August 12, 2021, committee chairman Bennie Thompson announced he had appointed Timothy Heaphy, former US attorney for the Western District of Virginia from 2009 through 2014, as the chief investigative counsel for the select committee. Heaphy is a Democrat who has been the top lawyer at the University of Virginia since 2018.

Victoria LaCivita, a spokeswoman for Miyares, claimed the Republican attorney general’s decision to fire Heaphy “had nothing to do with the January 6 committee or their investigation,” instead claiming that Heaphy had been a “controversial” hire and that the new attorney general “wants the university counsel to return to giving legal advice based on law, and not the philosophy of a university.”

Heaphy had been granted a leave of absence by the university to participate in the committee’s activities. After Heaphy announced he would take leave from the university to work for the committee, University of Virginia President Jim Ryan issued a statement that read in part, “I wish him all the best in this important public service assignment, but also look forward to his return.”



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