

Republicans remove Ilhan Omar from House Foreign Affairs Committee, Democrats capitulate

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On Thursday, House Republicans voted to remove Representative Ilhan Omar, Democrat from Minnesota, from the Foreign Affairs Committee, where she has served since taking office in 2019. The resolution passed on a party-line vote of 218-211, with all Republicans save one, who voted “present,” voting to remove Omar and all voting Democrats opposing the move.

Republican Speaker Kevin McCarthy, who heads up a narrow Republican majority in the House, had vowed two years ago that he would remove Omar from the Foreign Affairs Committee if the GOP retook control of the House in the 2022 midterm elections. Omar, one of two female Muslims elected to the House in 2018, is a naturalized US citizen who came to the country as a twelve-year-old refugee from civil war-torn Somalia.

After taking office, she was quickly targeted by Republicans and Zionist organizations for making mild criticisms of Israeli repression of Palestinians and the de facto green light given by the US political establishment to the Israeli government. She was witch-hunted for supposed anti-Semitism, in line with the international attack on “left-wing anti-Semitism” directed against critics of the illegal Israeli occupation of the West Bank and Tel Aviv’s violent oppression of the Palestinian population.

Then-House Speaker Nancy Pelosi and the Democratic leadership of the House joined in the attack on Omar after she criticized the influence of the American Israel Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC) on US policy and policy-makers in 2019, orchestrating a bipartisan vote by the entire House to demand that she apologize. Omar quickly and obsequiously obliged, voting for a resolution essentially equating criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism and publicly retracting her earlier remark.

Omar is the third Democrat to be removed from a committee post by the new Republican majority in the House and its Speaker, McCarthy. Last month, McCarthy removed California Democrats Adam Schiff and Eric Swalwell from the House Intelligence Committee, fulfilling another pledge he made prior to the 2022 elections. In this case, a vote by the entire House was not required, since the Intelligence Committee is a select committee, whose members are appointed by the House Speaker, traditionally in consultation with the leader of the minority party.

Meanwhile, McCarthy has allotted an outsized number of slots on key committees to members of the fascistic House Freedom

Caucus who held up his election for Speaker for 15 ballots and a full week when the new Congress assembled in January, as well as other far-right lawmakers who supported his bid for the speakership. These include two fascist Republicans—Paul Gosar of Arizona and Marjorie Taylor Greene of Georgia—who were removed from their committee posts in 2021 by the Democratic House leadership at the time after they posted violent threats on social media against Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Nancy Pelosi, President Joe Biden and other Democrats.

McCarthy has awarded Greene two positions on top committees, Homeland Security and Oversight. Gosar is also expected to be given a spot on the House Oversight Committee.

Gosar and Greene highlight the glaring hypocrisy of the Republicans’ attacks on Omar and their pretenses of opposing anti-Semitism. One year ago, both attended the America First Political Action Conference in Florida headed up by Nick Fuentes, an open white supremacist, anti-Semite and Hitler admirer.

Fuentes first gained prominence for participating in the 2017 neo-Nazi “Unite the Right” march in Charlottesville, Virginia, which included a torchlight parade and chants of “Jews Will Not Replace Us!” That slogan embodies the “Great Replacement Theory” of the fascist right, which holds that international Jewry is working to dilute and replace white European stock by infiltrating Muslims and others.

Then-President Donald Trump infamously praised the “good people” at the Charlottesville march. More recently, this past December, he had dinner at his Florida estate with Fuentes and another anti-Semite, the rapper Ye.

Greene has repeatedly tweeted anti-Semitic tropes in line with the fascist QAnon conspiracy. One speculated that a wave of wildfires in California were caused by a beam from “space solar generators” linked to “Rothschild, Inc.”

Trump has directly attacked Omar at rallies, saying she hates America and should go back to Somalia, prompting his audience to chant “Send her back!” She and other targets of Republican fascist agitation such as Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez have received multiple death threats.

Nor has McCarthy abstained from anti-Semitic agitation himself. In 2018, just days before the attack on the Tree of Life synagogue in Pittsburgh, the deadliest attack on Jewish people in US history, he tweeted: “We cannot allow Soros, Steyer and Bloomberg to

BUY this election!” All three are wealthy Jewish supporters of the Democratic Party.

None of this has prevented the Democrats, including Omar, from groveling before the fascist right. For the Democratic Party, no less than the Republicans, the Israeli regime is a critical ally in the drive by US imperialism to establish global supremacy, focused presently on the escalating war against Russia in Ukraine and preparations for war against China. In particular, it stands in the forefront of US imperialist provocations against Iran, which are being intensified under conditions where Iran is supplying drones and other weapons to the Putin regime.

On January 26, one week before the scheduled vote on her removal from the Foreign Affairs Committee, Omar placed a post on her official Twitter account lauding her meeting with the commander of the US Africa Command. So as to leave no doubt as to her pro-imperialist loyalties, the tweet stated:

It was a pleasure to talk with General Michael E. Langley, the sixth commander of US Africa Command about counterterrorism and diplomacy.

Rep. Omar discussed the US military’s role in Somalia; the need to prioritize development and diplomacy in Africa; counterterrorism policy on the continent; and Global Fragility Act implementation.

She also congratulated General Langley on becoming the first Black four star general in the history of the United States Marine Corps, and looks forward to continuing their productive conversation.

On the day of the vote, in a further signal to both the Republican fascist right and the Democratic Party leadership, Omar signed onto a new resolution authored by Democratic Representative Josh Gottheimer of New Jersey and co-sponsored by some 30 Democratic House members “recognizing Israel as America’s legitimate and democratic ally and condemning anti-Semitism.”

Gottheimer issued a statement congratulating Omar on supporting “Israel as a Jewish and legitimate democratic state,” i.e., one in which Muslims and Palestinians are relegated to an inferior status based on their religion and nationality. Gottheimer went on to say that the resolution “acknowledges Israel as a vital ally” and “condemns the use of antisemitic tropes, including those masquerading as anti-Israel sentiments.”

Not accidentally, this blank check to the Zionist regime takes place under conditions of extreme political instability in Israel, with hundreds of thousands marching in recent days, both Jews and Palestinians, against the recently installed extreme right coalition government headed by Likud leader Benjamin Netanyahu. The government includes fascistic and racist parties based on Jewish settlers and ultra-Orthodox parties hostile to whatever remains of Israel’s secular past.

Moving toward the permanent annexation of the West Bank and even more pervasive apartheid conditions, Netanyahu has taken a major step toward authoritarian rule by seeking to abolish the post of attorney general and put an end to the independence of the

judiciary. This has triggered historic mass demonstrations of not only national and regional, but international significance.

Over the past month, no less than three top US security officials—National Security Adviser Jake Sullivan, CIA Director William Burns and Secretary of State Antony Blinken—have traveled to Israel to discuss the internal crisis and plans for further aggression against Iran.

On January 28, Israeli agents launched drone attacks on Iranian military targets in Isfahan, a center of Iranian air and space operations. Earlier in the month, the US and Israel carried out their largest-ever joint military exercises, involving 7,500 troops and encompassing air, sea and ground forces. US NSC spokesman John Kirby said the exercises were directed against Iran.

The internal situation has meanwhile become a social tinderbox. An Israeli military raid in the West Bank city of Jenin on January 26 left 10 Palestinians dead. That touched off a series of attacks by lone Palestinians on Jews in Jerusalem and scores of attacks by settlers on Palestinians across the West Bank.

As the WSWS wrote of the first mass protest against the new government, held on January 14:

Homemade placards on the protest warned against “fascism,” a “coup d’etat,” a “criminal government,” and “the end of democracy.” Jewish people joined Israeli Arabs in carrying Palestinian flags, in defiance of [fascist National Security Minister] Ben-Gvir’s call for the police to crack down.

These protests have given the lie to the global witch-hunting of opponents of Israeli oppression of the Palestinians as anti-Semites. If they are anti-Semites, then so too are hundreds of thousands of Israeli citizens.



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