

# Congress, Biden embrace Israeli racists and warmongers

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President Joe Biden and congressional Democrats and Republicans joined hands this week in a bipartisan tribute to the state of Israel and its president, Isaac Herzog. They repudiated suggestions that Israel is a racist state and downplayed any policy disagreements with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, the actual head of the ultra-right government in Jerusalem.

Biden began the week by telephoning Netanyahu and inviting him to meet during his next trip to the United States, which is likely to be for a United Nations General Assembly session in September. It was not clear whether the Biden-Netanyahu meeting, long postponed, would be held at the White House or on the sidelines of the UN meeting in New York City.

The invitation came only days after a deadly Israeli military assault on the city of Jenin in the occupied West Bank, in which at least a dozen Palestinians were killed. While Herzog was schmoozing at the White House, hundreds of thousands of Israelis were protesting against Netanyahu's "reform" of the judicial system which would subordinate the only independent branch of the Zionist state to the demands of Netanyahu's narrow majority in the Knesset, the Israeli parliament.

Netanyahu has pushed for the crippling of the Supreme Court for two reasons: to block it from disqualifying cabinet ministers for corruption convictions, such as Aryah Deri, the leader of the right-wing religious party Shas, a coalition partner, and Netanyahu himself; and to consolidate the entire state apparatus under the domination of his ultra-right coalition, which would then be able to forge ahead with such measures as the systematic dispossession of Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and military strikes against Iran as well as pro-Iranian forces in Lebanon, Syria and Iraq.

The visit by President Herzog, a political opponent of Netanyahu who occupies a purely ceremonial position in the Israeli state, allowed Biden and the Democratic Party to put on a display of support for Israel while distancing themselves slightly from Netanyahu's government. His ultra-right coalition includes both extreme religious parties and outright fascist groups based in the settler population of the West Bank, who advocate the wholesale expulsion of Palestinians and outright annexation of the Occupied Territories.

These differences, however, are purely tactical, although they were exacerbated by Netanyahu's fulsome support for the US Republican Party and his open preference for the reelection of Donald Trump, an unprecedented intervention by a foreign country in US politics—and far more overt and consequential than the supposed interference by Russian President Vladimir Putin in the 2016 presidential election.

President Herzog enjoyed the full panoply of a state visit: a meeting in the White House with Biden, an address to a Joint Session of Congress, and subsequent meetings with Vice President Kamala Harris and Secretary of State Antony Blinken.

At the beginning of the White House meeting, President Biden said of Israel and the United States, "This is a friendship I believe is just simply unbreakable... As I confirmed to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu yesterday, America's commitment to Israel is firm and it is ironclad." The US supplies Israel nearly \$4 billion in military aid each year.

Before Herzog's speech, the House of Representatives voted near-unanimously for a Republican resolution declaring an unshakeable US commitment to Israel's security and repudiating any suggesting that Israel was a racist or apartheid state.

The resolution passed the House by a vote of 412-9, with one abstention.

All 10 dissenters were liberal Democrats, including the members of the so-called squad, the group headed by Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez, Rashida Tlaib, Jamal Bowman and Cori Bush, all affiliated with the Democratic Socialists of America. The fifth DSA member in the House, Greg Casar of Texas, voted to support the pro-Israel resolution.

The resolution was sparked by the controversy touched off by the remarks of Representative Pramila Jayapal, chair of the Congressional Progressive Caucus, at the Netroots Nation conference of liberal and pseudo-left activists in Chicago last weekend. In response to a protest by a pro-Palestinian group, Jayapal spoke an obvious truth, that Israel is a racist state, due to its policies of discriminating against Palestinians and elevating the Jewish population above the Arabs born and raised in the same land.

After a hue and cry by pro-Zionist Democrats, who circulated a letter denouncing Jayapal, she retracted her comments and issued an apology. The Republican resolution was then drafted to throw salt on the wound. Some 195 Democrats voted for the resolution, including the entire leadership of the party in the House, as well as Jayapal herself.

After this debacle, the stage was set for Herzog's speech to Congress Wednesday, ostensibly to mark the 75th anniversary of the founding of the state of Israel and the initiation of the US-Israeli alliance. A handful of Democratic representatives boycotted the speech—basically the same group that opposed the pro-Israel resolution—but the members of Congress who did attend were near-unanimous in their praise, rising repeatedly to give standing ovations to the Israeli president.

Herzog repeated the outrageous amalgam developed by Zionist groups in the last few years, according to which anyone who criticizes the state of Israel is an antisemite. “[C]riticism of Israel must not cross the line into negation of the state of Israel's right to exist,” he said. “Questioning the Jewish people's right to self-determination, is not legitimate diplomacy, it is antisemitism.”

This argument leaves out, of course, the rights of the Palestinian people, which have been systematically violated by the Zionist state, and which are under attack

every day through such measures as military violence, the operation of roads and other infrastructure limited to Jews, and the ongoing dispossession of Palestinians by settlement building in the occupied territories.



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