

AOC backs US funding of Israeli missile defense

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In an interview with CNN’s Abby Phillip on Monday night, Democratic Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez walked back her previous token opposition to US government aid for Israeli militarism, saying that she would now vote in support of US funding of Israel’s Iron Dome anti-missile system. Iron Dome allows the Israel Defense Forces to conduct unlimited air strikes on Gaza without any fear of retaliation by rocket attacks from Hamas or other Palestinian armed groups.

In December 2021, Ocasio-Cortez came under attack from right-wing groups when she voted “present” rather than “yes” on a bill providing additional US aid to Israel, mainly for Iron Dome. She cited concerns about the actions of the Netanyahu government, including a missile strike that targeted journalists’ offices in the Gaza Strip.

Now, amid saturation bombing of Gaza in which thousands of Palestinians have been killed, including more than 1,000 children, Ocasio-Cortez is willing to support not only US military aid for Iron Dome, but also Israeli action against Hamas—i.e., the ongoing campaign of mass murder throughout Gaza and the preparation of an Israeli invasion and mass displacement of the Palestinian population.

For years, Ocasio-Cortez has been the most visible representative of the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA) on the national stage. In 2018, she became the first DSA-backed candidate, and DSA member, to defeat an incumbent Democrat in a primary. She went on to win the heavily Democratic seat in the Bronx and Queens, New York, which she has held ever since. This year, as part of her integration into the party establishment, she was given a minor position in the party leadership in the House.

The “squad” of DSA members or representatives linked to the DSA has now swelled to more than half a dozen, including Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib, Ayanna Pressley, Cori Bush, Greg Casar and Summer Lee. Ocasio-Cortez is by far the most widely publicized, frequently interviewed

by the national media, with a prominent platform for addressing issues such as the crisis in the Middle East. But particularly on foreign policy, she maintains a slavish support of American imperialism in general and the Biden administration in particular.

This was demonstrated at some length in her CNN interview Monday and not only on the question of US military aid to Israel. She hemmed and hawed on Phillip’s question about changing her position since 2021, finally saying that if a bill was limited to financing the Iron Dome, such aid was “absolutely legitimate.”

She continued, almost babbling, “I have concerns about white phosphorus, I have concerns about human rights and insuring that we have humanitarian aid going through,” she told Phillip. “But on the sole principle of Iron Dome and defense, I absolutely think there’s an openness, for sure.”

Ocasio-Cortez was no more coherent but nonetheless unmistakably pro-imperialist on related questions: calling for a ceasefire in the fighting, and responding to the declaration by Republican presidential hopeful Ron DeSantis that the US should accept no refugees from Gaza because “they’re all antisemitic.”

A transcript captures both aspects of the conversation:

OCASIO-CORTEZ: Well, when we talk about going in there, I think we should also keep in mind President Biden’s statements as well about what the implications of a potential ground invasion would be. This is an inherently complex situation. I do believe that Hamas needs to be dealt with.

PHILLIP: But how, I think, is what I’m trying to understand.

OCASIO-CORTEZ: And I think what we’re trying to figure out right now is that this present

situation of collective punishment and indiscriminate attack is one approach. But we are seeing that the issues and the complications of that approach now, can we target them in terms of intelligence? Is there precision? What are the options available are entirely up to the administration and for Israel to examine and explore.

And moving on to Ron DeSantis:

PHILLIP: There is a lot in there, but I wonder, for you, is he touching on something that is perhaps real here? Should Arab countries be taking on the lion's share of the burden to absorb what could be over a million if not more refugees from Gaza?

OCASIO-CORTEZ: I think there is something to be said about the region's partners being able to support and step up Palestinians. However, that does not abdicate the United States from our historic role that we have played in the world of accepting refugees and allowing people to restart their lives here.

Two important observations must be made. First, Ocasio-Cortez cedes to President Joe Biden the decisive role in determining US policy towards Israel and Gaza. In other words, the principal representative of American imperialism must decide how far to support Israel in its attack on Gaza, and she will support him.

The congresswoman adds, "I do believe that Hamas needs to be dealt with." So she accepts entirely the framework of US "national security" interests laid down by the military-intelligence apparatus and Wall Street.

In relation to DeSantis, Ocasio-Cortez effectively accepts the figure of "one million or more refugees from Gaza" offered by the CNN correspondent. She does not suggest that such a mass displacement of Palestinians—greater numerically than the original *nakba* that dispersed the Palestinians in 1947-48 and made possible the establishment of the state of Israel—would itself be a war crime of monstrous proportions. The only issue is where these Palestinians should go and whether a small number will be allowed into the United States.

There is currently a bitter conflict raging within the DSA over the slowness of the group's leadership to embrace the full anti-Palestinian hysteria unleashed by the US political establishment and corporate media in the wake of the October 7 attack by Hamas across the border of Gaza and into southern Israel, in which as many as 1,400 Israelis and an estimated 1,500 Hamas militants were killed.

One long-time public representative of the DSA, columnist Harold Meyerson, issued a statement announcing his resignation from the group, in which he praised Senator Bernie Sanders and Representative Ocasio-Cortez because "both explicitly and forcefully condemned Hamas."

He was responding specifically to the statement issued by Ocasio-Cortez last week in which she condemned a pro-Palestinian rally held in Times Square October 8, claiming, "The bigotry and callousness expressed in Times Square on Sunday were unacceptable and harmful in this devastating moment."

Ocasio-Cortez made no reference to the fact that the Israeli military was killing Palestinians by the thousands in Gaza, allegedly in retaliation for the Hamas raid, or that the government had imposed a blockade barring the 2 million people in Gaza from access to electricity, water and food.

There is no doubt that Ocasio-Cortez has her eye on a more prominent role within the Democratic Party. If the price of that political success is to drop her previous mealy-mouthed rhetoric about sympathy for the Palestinians, she has no problem doing so, whatever the verbal contortions that now entails.

More fundamentally, the global explosion of US militarism, with the opening of war fronts that extend from Ukraine to Gaza to Iran to the South China Sea, has shut down any space for radical posturing by the pseudo-left. They must show their true colors politically, and that means lining up as supporters, cheerleaders and potential leaders of American imperialism.



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