

In response to question, how many Gazans must die, Florida legislator shouts, “All of them.”

Patrick Martin
12 November 2023

In a sickening but little publicized incident during a session of the Florida state legislature, a Republican member voiced her support for killing the entire population of Gaza. The statement took place in the course of a special session of the state legislature devoted to the Middle East, called by Republican Governor Ron DeSantis in order to provide ammunition for his struggling presidential campaign.

The session was held on Tuesday afternoon, November 7, one day before the third Republican presidential debate. It was timed so that DeSantis could claim to be leading an effort to mobilize public support for Israel.

DeSantis had two resolutions introduced which were devised to get around the inconvenient fact that the Florida legislature would not ordinarily have any occasion to discuss the subject, since foreign policy is exclusively the province of the federal government. The first resolution tightened Florida state government sanctions on Iran. The second provided funds for increased security at Jewish day schools within the state.

Two legislators, one Democrat and one Republican, issued rival resolutions supporting the state of Israel, with the Republican resolution also calling for an end to US government financial support for Palestinian aid organizations and denouncing campus protests against the bombing of Gaza. But the session was thrown into turmoil when a lone Democrat, Angie Nixon of Jacksonville, introduced a resolution deploring the massive death toll in Gaza and urging a ceasefire.

While her resolution began with a denunciation of Hamas for the October 7 attack that breached Israeli military lines and killed an estimated 1,200 Israelis, no

acknowledgement of the ongoing mass killing in Gaza was acceptable to either corporate-controlled party.

Nixon’s resolution was seconded by Anna Eskamani, the first Iranian American elected to the state legislature, and she refused to withdraw it despite pleas from Democratic Minority Leader Fentrice Driskell. Republican House Speaker Paul Renner ordered it put to a roll call vote, hoping to “embarrass” the Democrats, but the resolution was eventually defeated by a vote of 104-2, with only Nixon and Eskamani supporting it.

The lone Jewish Republican legislator, Larry Fine of Miami, vilified the resolution, claiming that its reference to “occupied Palestine” was antisemitic. “If you vote for this,” he said, “you are putting my child and every Jewish child in the state at risk.” Calling Nixon and Eskamani “evil” for opposing mass murder in Gaza, he questioned the death toll among Palestinians given in the resolution. “You are repeating a number that is given by terrorists,” he said, suggesting that many or most of the dead were “terrorists.”

The open declaration of support for mass murder came from another Republican, Michelle Salzman of Pensacola. When Nixon took the podium to speak in favor of the resolution, virtually the entire state legislature, Democratic and Republican, rose to their feet and turned their backs on her.

“We are at 10,000 dead Palestinians. How many will be enough?” Nixon asked. A voice—later identified as Salzman’s—shouted out, “All of them.”

Nixon was staggered but brought this declaration of support for the extermination of the population of Gaza to the attention of the entire legislature. “One of my

colleagues just said ‘all of them.’ Wow,” she continued. “That’s what we have become in this state? We don’t care about innocent babies that don’t get the chance to blow out their first birthday candle?”

There was a furious public reaction to Salzman’s comment. Journalists raised questions, and Nixon demanded her resignation. The state legislator initially denied that she had said it, telling WEAR News, “That’s fake. You really should know that.”

She later posted a tweet acknowledging her words but claimed that “all of them” referred to Hamas and not to the people of Gaza as a whole. She wrote: “On Tuesday, I was proud to stand with my colleagues in absolute solidarity with Israel’s right to defend itself. I also commented that every single terrorist that attacked Israel and triggered this war should be eliminated—ALL OF THEM.”

Later she backtracked even further, tweeting, “It’s the most horrific of implications. I am so incredibly sorry for even the slightest of suggestions that I would want an entire community erased. My comments were unapologetically towards the Hamas regime—I NEVER said Palestine. As a wife and mother of a Jew, I stand strong in my support for Israel. But the heartbreaking loss of Palestinian lives is never a desire of mine.”

Nixon later described the fascistic political atmosphere in the state legislature. “You have sitting FL legislators calling for the total annihilation of a group of people on the chamber floor. You have some sharing photos of Palestinian babies laying dead in rubble with quotes saying, ‘Thank You.’ You have them calling colleagues ‘terrorists.’”

Last Tuesday’s incident has been greeted with virtual silence by the corporate media, in keeping with their systematic blackout of the mass protests against the Gaza genocide. The *New York Times*, the *Washington Post*, the *Wall Street Journal*, CNN and the broadcast networks have said nothing, although Salzman’s comment was widely reported on local and statewide media. A single eight-minute segment on MSNBC, including a sympathetic interview with Angie Nixon, is the only significant national coverage so far.

This event gives a glimpse of the political chasm that has opened up between, on the one side, the two parties of the corporate ruling elite, both deeply implicated in some of the worst crimes of the 21st century, and, on the other side, the vast majority the population—working

people and young people—who are increasingly and publicly demonstrating their opposition to these crimes.



To contact the WSWS and the
Socialist Equality Party visit:

wsws.org/contact