

Irish protesters denounce Bernie Sanders as a Zionist genocide denier over Gaza

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Pro-Palestinian protesters at University College Dublin denounced Bernie Sanders as a Zionist for opposing a ceasefire in Gaza and as a genocide denier for refusing to back South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ).

At a February 15 discussion between Bernie Sanders and David McWilliams of the *Irish Times* during the Dalkey Book Festival, the left-posturing senator from Vermont was promoting his book, *It's OK To Be Angry At Capitalism*.

During the event that attracted 1,000 people, he said that he was trying to persuade the Biden administration to call for a "humanitarian pause or ceasefire in order to provide the desperately needed aid." However, referring to the International Court of Justice provisional ruling on January 26 that there are legal grounds for accusing Israel of carrying out a genocide against the Palestinian people, Sanders said he is just "a little bit queasy" about the use of the word "genocide. We have to be careful about it."

One audience member shouted, "It is a genocide." Another demanded of Sanders, "What's your definition of genocide?" A third made a longer denunciation from the floor, saying, "Bernie, you have funded Zionism yourself. You have funded the Israeli settler state. Here you are, pretending you aren't. It is disgusting. Liar, liar, genocide denier!" He concluded, "It is disgusting. It's reprehensible. You are a child killer, you are a genocide denier. The United States military industrial complex are the largest murderers in the world. It does not matter if it is a Democrat or a Republican. You have murdered people around the world."

Others in the hall chanted, "Resistance is an obligation in the face of occupation," and "Occupation is terrorism."

Outside protesters had chanted earlier, "it's okay to

be angry about capitalism, what about Zionism?"

The next evening at Trinity College, Sanders was to speak at an event organised by the Sanders Institute and the New York Ireland Project, introduced by another *Irish Times* journalist, Fintan O'Toole. Tickets were priced at €45.

Pro-Palestinian activists gathered chanting, "Bernie Sanders you can't hide, you're denying genocide." and "USA, what do you say? How many kids have you killed today?"

Inside, Sanders spoke without challenge for most of the proceedings, during which he said he was "working hard to change Biden's position on Israel" while insisting he would "do my best to defeat Trump, understanding that Biden has not done by any means what I would like to see him do."

A female protester in the hall moved towards the platform, asking, "Why won't you call for a ceasefire?" She referenced Sanders' statement to CNN in November last year that he didn't believe "you can have a permanent ceasefire with an organisation like Hamas."

As security blocked her, O'Toole said she could "ask the question." Sanders then replied that he wasn't going to answer the question because "I don't like people disrupting me." He continued that he had previously talked about his "views on Gaza" and was doing "everything I can." An audience member yelled, "No you're not."

According to *Trinity News*, someone sitting in the audience asked Sanders about a ceasefire, to which he contemptuously suggested that the man should "call Mr. Netanyahu and say, you know, Bibi, I think you should have a ceasefire." Amid other calls for a ceasefire from the audience, Sanders said you can "call [for] whatever you want," but the "best role" he could

play was blocking aid to Israel.

Boasting of his motion calling for the latest \$14 billion tranche of US military aid to Israel to be suspended, he claimed pathetically, “My dream would be that the president finally wakes up to what I think the American people want and to say, ‘you know what Mr Netanyahu, you’re not going to get another nickel until you stop that damn war and treat the Palestinian people with the respect and dignity they deserve.’”

He continued, “I have nightmares about what is going on, it is a horror. Believe it or not, I’m trying to do my best to end that war.” One of a small number of demonstrators in the hall shouted, “It’s not a horror, it’s a genocide.”

Around 20 protesters delayed Sanders’s car from leaving the university, chanting, “Bernie Sanders you can’t hide, you’re supporting genocide,” and “Ceasefire now.” A dozen Gardaí (police officers) formed a blockade and Sanders was then driven away.

Sanders’s reputation as a “left” and his ability to act as a shield and apologist for the Democratic Party have been massively discredited by his barely concealed support for Israel’s genocide in Gaza.

A November 29, 2023, WSWS article by Barry Grey was titled, “Bernie Sanders: The left face of genocide.” It noted that Sanders “is seeking to present himself as an even-handed advocate for both the Israeli state and the Palestinians,” citing his November 22 op-ed in the *New York Times* headlined, “Justice for the Palestinians and Security for Israel,” and referencing his statement to CNN opposing calls for a ceasefire.

“Sanders’ comments were praised by Israeli officials, and Israeli government spokesman Eylon Levy shared a clip of the interview on X/Twitter,” Grey wrote. Sanders’ November 22 *Times* op-ed called for an “extended humanitarian pause” rather than a ceasefire and made no mention of “genocide,” “war crime,” “ethnic cleansing” or “Biden.” “In the end,” Grey summed up, “Sanders offers a list of proposals similar in substance to the public positions of President Biden and Secretary of State Blinken. They do not include a permanent halt to Israeli bombing, the immediate withdrawal of all Israeli forces from Gaza, or the removal of the Netanyahu government.”

The longer Israel’s campaign of mass murder and ethnic cleansing has continued, the more exposed Sanders has become, especially over his backing for

“Genocide Joe” while claiming to have differences with him over Gaza. A February 1 article in *New York* magazine offers an extended apologia for Sanders under the title, “Bernie’s Pressure Campaign: He’s getting louder about America’s role in Israel’s war, pushing his own party to act before it’s too late.”

Interviewing Sanders, Gabriel Debenedetti notes that the two spoke “less than 24 hours after Joe Biden had struggled to make it through a Virginia rally that was meant to be focused on abortion rights. Fourteen times, the president [had] been interrupted by protesters chanting ‘Genocide Joe’ or demanding a cease-fire.”

Sanders response was to claim that “we are doing our best to turn the administration around” and this was “working even if the results weren’t yet visible.” Sanders was now receiving flak in the US, with an open letter “signed by hundreds of his former campaign staffers” urging him “to introduce a cease-fire resolution in the Senate and to cut off military aid to Israel.”

Sanders’ resolution opposing the release of \$14 billion in aid to Israel was his defensive response and was backed by only 11 senators. “People have never questioned the Israeli government’s motives, and we’re asking them to do that for the very first time,” he said in justification.

Meanwhile, Sanders’ defence of Biden continues, most recently in his refusal to back a call by “Our Revolution”—a campaign group founded to support his own presidential campaign in 2016—calling on Michigan voters to spurn Biden in the state’s February 27 Democratic primary by voting “uncommitted.”

Sanders told the *HuffPost* he was supporting Biden, with spokeswoman Anna Bahr saying in a statement, “Bernie is supporting the President’s re-election and wants him to do well in the Michigan primary and elsewhere.”



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