

Anti-genocide protesters attacked and beaten at St. Louis town hall event for Democrat Wesley Bell

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At his first in-person townhall meeting on August 19 in the First Congressional District in St. Louis, Missouri, Democratic Representative Wesley Bell was confronted by protesters, many of them Jewish, who criticized his support for the US-backed Israeli genocide in Gaza.

Bell's rambling rebuttal in defense of Israel's actions was met with an unending chorus of boos and shouts of "Shame!" He went on to slander the protesters as allies of Hamas, accusing them of "standing with an organization that want to commit genocide."

This "big lie" accusation is being used by ruling classes worldwide to justify the ripping up of democratic rights and violent state repression as social opposition to war and capitalist austerity continue to mount.

Saul Glist, who was in attendance, told St. Louis NPR, "While [Bell] claims to represent us, while he claims to be fighting antisemitism, while he claims to speak for the Jewish community, the Jewish community here is angry. The Jewish community here is firm in its stance against genocide, and I think this was the first time that, you know, that really got to be said clearly to him."

Bell's private security team and police from at least two different jurisdictions, including Pagedale and St. Louis Metro police, moved to shut down the event by shoving several young women and men, grabbing them by the throat, tossing one into a wall by her hair, and throwing them to the ground amid a flurry of verbal threats.

St. Louis Metro police issued a statement attempting to distance itself from the event, saying none of its

officers were involved.

The Democratic Party is rapidly moving further to the right in its collaboration with the Trump administration's accelerating efforts to establish a police-state dictatorship in the US. Rep. Bell's rise to leadership in the Missouri Democratic Party in a relatively short period of time is emblematic of this shift.

Bell was elected the St. Louis County prosecuting attorney in 2019, running on supposedly "progressive" policies. St. Louis County includes the suburb of Ferguson, where Michael Brown, an African American teenager, was murdered by police in 2014, touching off widespread protests and leading to then-Governor Jay Nixon, a Democrat, to send in the state police and then the National Guard.

The legacy of Bell's tenure as prosecutor has been the doubling of the county jail population from 2022-2024, due to an increase of more than 140 percent for lower-level felony charges. The local Fox affiliate reports that some detainees are remaining in jail for long periods of time due to large cash bonds that must be paid in full, thus lengthening jail time for the poor prior to any court date.

In spring 2023 Bell announced a Senate run against fascist Republican Josh Hawley but in October that year he abandoned it, announcing he would instead challenge Democratic Representative Cori Bush, the incumbent in the First District, which includes the city of St. Louis and the northern part of neighboring St. Louis County. Bell and Bush are both African American, both nominally liberal, but Bush, a member of the Democratic Socialists of America, voiced opposition to the genocide in Gaza.

Bell was supported by right-wing donors in this effort, including Republican politicians and those who mainly back Republicans. His biggest single donor was the Zionist lobby AIPAC, which gave him more than \$12.8 million, a staggering sum for a single congressional campaign, nearly five times the average total expenditure for winning House candidates nationwide.

The brutality with which political opposition is suppressed exists in inverse proportion to the legitimacy of both Democratic and Republican parties in the eyes of a growing majority of US residents.

While Democratic officials have shared videos of constituents confronting Republicans at town halls, they have been mostly silent on instances of anti-genocide protesters being removed from Democratic officials' rallies and events. One instance of this was Bernie Sanders' attempt to shut down anti-genocide protesters at an Idaho rally.

?At a discussion following the town hall debacle, Bell commented, “I think the only disappointing part is that there are a lot of issues that are plaguing us in St. Louis—gun violence, public safety, health care, and not as much time was spent on addressing those concerns.”

The reality is that the genocide in Palestine is an outgrowth of the same crisis starving the social infrastructure he claims he wanted to address, namely the crisis of capitalism.

The Democratic Party is a capitalist party of Wall Street and war, impervious to any sort of pressure to abandon imperialism and organically incapable of progressively addressing any of the major issues confronting workers and youth in this country. For this a socialist party and program is needed.



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