Harris campaigns with El-Sayed in Detroit: Gaza genocide buried in the name of Democratic “unity”

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On September 22, former Vice President Kamala Harris joined Abdul El-Sayed, the Democratic candidate for US Senate from Michigan, for a campaign event in Detroit. It was Harris’s first campaign appearance of the 2026 midterm election cycle.

El-Sayed won the Democratic primary in August with the support of young people and opponents of the Gaza genocide, on the basis of his stated opposition to US military aid to Israel. He was also unofficially backed by the Democratic Socialists of America (DSA), whose members were mobilized to campaign for him. This despite his avowed opposition to socialism.

El-Sayed’s decision to welcome Harris, a central figure in the Biden administration that armed, financed and diplomatically shielded Israel throughout the slaughter, exposes the political function of his campaign. Opposition to genocide is being subordinated to the election of another Democratic senator.

Following Biden’s withdrawal from the 2024 race, the product of his immense unpopularity and his evident mental decline, Harris was anointed the nominee in large part because she pledged to continue his war policies. Days after Biden withdrew and endorsed her, she welcomed Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu to the White House. “I told him that I will always ensure that Israel is able to defend itself, including from Iran and Iran-backed militias, such as Hamas and Hezbollah,” Harris said.

Throughout her presidential campaign she refused to entertain an arms embargo against Israel. Her campaign barred the “Uncommitted” movement, including Georgia state Representative Ruwa Romman, a Palestinian-American who supported Harris, from speaking at the Democratic National Convention. In her acceptance speech she pledged to build “the most lethal fighting force in the world.”

Harris lost Michigan to Donald Trump in November 2024. Anger over the Biden-Harris administration’s support for Israel contributed to the collapse of Democratic support in Arab-American communities, including Dearborn. El-Sayed, who had backed the “Uncommitted” protest vote against Biden in Michigan’s presidential primary, endorsed Harris immediately after Biden withdrew and campaigned for her in the general election.

Harris is now being sent back to Michigan on behalf of a candidate whose primary victory rested on opposition to military aid to Israel. Harris endorsed El-Sayed on August 7, shortly after he defeated Representative Haley Stevens. In announcing the endorsement, El-Sayed’s campaign praised her 2024 run as a “historic 107 day campaign” centered on economic opportunity, reproductive rights and opposition to Trump. The statement did not mention Gaza. El-Sayed called Harris’s support “critical” and said he was “humbled and grateful” for it.

The purpose of the September 22 event was to help El-Sayed win support among African American voters in Detroit, home to nearly half a million black residents, roughly 76 percent of the city’s population. El-Sayed won the statewide primary by one percentage point, 48.5 to 47.5, but lost Wayne County, where he had served as county health director from 2023 to 2025, by roughly 17,000 votes, and lost Detroit by a wide margin. Nearly the entire Detroit political establishment, along with 14 black members of

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Congress, backed Stevens.

The event was a roundtable on black maternal health at the Birth Detroit's Birth Center clinic, presented as an expression of concern over a genuine crisis. In Michigan, the maternal mortality rate among black women was 2.3 times that of white women in 2019–2023, and the infant mortality rate among black infants was 2.7 times that of white infants in 2022–2023.

Harris told the roundtable, "I'm here to support Dr. El-Sayed because, on this subject, I know he will be a champion." She said the Senate must serve as a "stopgap on the abuses" of the Trump administration and declared that "an attack on DEI … is an attack by definition on maternal care."

The framing of the event, and Harris's own words, treated the crisis as a racial question detached from the class conditions that produce them, including poverty, hospital closures, the gutting of public health and a for-profit healthcare system that the Democratic Party defends no less than the Republicans. This framing serves the Democrats' relationship with the black middle-class layers that run Detroit politics while offering nothing to the workers, of every race, who live with the consequences.

Before the roundtable, El-Sayed told reporters, "We're building an electoral coalition here." He said the 2024 election ended as it did because Democrats had failed to find "places of agreement" that could bring people together. Neither the campaign's endorsement announcement nor its account of the roundtable mentioned Harris's support for Israel.

In a press release after the event, the El-Sayed campaign wrote that the candidate had joined "Harris and leaders in the birth equity space," and that her presence "emphasized Democratic unity heading into November, and Abdul's broad support within the Black community."

When asked by a reporter why he would now accept the endorsement of Harris when he previously supported the "Uncommitted" movement, El-Sayed did not respond directly. Instead he condescendingly said the movement was only "uncommitted" to Biden, not to Harris, as if they did not share the same policies and the same class orientation.

Since winning the primary, El-Sayed has quickly shed much of his anti-war rhetoric. On NBC's *Meet the Press* on August 9, he defended US military aid to Ukraine in the US-NATO war against Russia, describing the conflict as one involving "a leader of a neighboring sovereign country, who clearly violated international law." In this he follows other "progressive" Democrats, including Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez.

El-Sayed's embrace of Harris is not unique. It expresses the primary role of the so-called "progressive" elements in and around the Democratic Party, to whitewash the crimes of the party and the ruling class and channel socialist and anti-war sentiment back into the graveyard of electoral politics.

The same week that El-Sayed campaigned with Harris, Zohran Mamdani, the Democratic Socialists of America member elected mayor of New York, hosted Trump at Gracie Mansion, and his police arrested demonstrators, including DSA members, protesting Netanyahu's appearance at the United Nations.

That El-Sayed, who presents himself as an opponent of genocide, can stand beside one of its facilitators demonstrates where his politics lie, not with the working class but with the ruling class whose party he seeks to join in the Senate. To stop the wars, halt the assault by ICE and win healthcare as a social right, workers must break with the Democratic Party and build an independent, international socialist movement.

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