

# Trump brands El-Sayed a “jihadist” in Michigan, as Obama offers jokes and silence on the threat of dictatorship

Patrick Martin  
26 October 2026

Back-to-back campaign rallies in Michigan, addressed by former President Barack Obama Saturday and President Donald Trump Sunday, expressed the degrading and reactionary alternatives offered by the two corporate-controlled parties in the midterm election, only a week away.

Trump vented anti-Muslim bigotry, while his administration prepares to challenge the defeats widely predicted for Republicans in congressional and governors’ races. The Democratic ex-president offered only canned jokes and empty demagoguery. He spoke of Trump’s attempt to overturn the 2020 election as a thing of the past and said nothing about the moves against this one, by the president he welcomed to the White House in 2016.

Trump held his campaign rally in the small border city of Port Huron, which has been devastated economically by his tariff war against Canada and the resulting crisis in the auto industry. He spent much of his nearly two-hour appearance vilifying Dr. Abdul El-Sayed, the Democratic candidate for Michigan’s US Senate seat.

Trump piled one smear upon another, calling El-Sayed a “jihadist” and a “Muslim Brotherhood member” who was “on the side of the terrorists” and wanted to bring Sharia law to America. He claimed that the career public health official, born in Detroit, would betray US military secrets to foreign enemies if he were elected. El-Sayed would “have to go through a metal detector before he’s allowed to go into the Senate.”

Trump named one after another of El-Sayed’s relatives, including his mother (who divorced his father and did not raise him), his father-in-law and his sister-in-law, in what amounted to incitement of violence

against the entire family of the Democratic candidate.

This was combined with numerous references to the September 11 terrorist attacks, directly comparing the campaign to defeat El-Sayed to the passengers who fought the hijackers of United Flight 93 and forced the plane to crash in rural Pennsylvania. To support this slander, Trump gave time during his remarks to David Beamer, father of one of those passengers, who made a frenzied anti-communist denunciation of the Democratic candidate.

Beamer said that unlike 9/11, “What’s different, what’s different this time is the enemy does not, has not come from abroad. The enemy is right here among us. Local terrorists, local citizens that want to demolish our country. They call themselves Democratic Socialists of America.”

Trump endorsed this amalgam of the DSA and Al Qaeda, declaring, “And we’re not gonna surrender America to communists, jihadists. We’re not gonna do it here.” He then linked his attack on El-Sayed to the raid by Homeland Security Investigations on Minnesota Representative Ilhan Omar, who is now the target of an effort to revoke her citizenship and imprison or deport her.

He then turned to his favorite topic, praising himself and lying about the supposed success of his economic policies and the war in Iran, both disasters for the working class in the United States and internationally.

The Democratic campaign rallies in Michigan included appearances by Obama Saturday in Detroit and by Senator Bernie Sanders in Grand Rapids on Sunday and in Ann Arbor Monday. All drew larger attendance than Trump’s rally, an indication of the mass opposition to the Trump administration’s

policies. This is being diverted by the UAW and other unions, as well as pseudo-left groups like the DSA, into support for the Democratic Party, the alternate party of Wall Street and the military-intelligence apparatus.

Obama's speech at Cass Tech High School in Detroit featured a series of jokes and one-liners mocking Trump, delivered in an entirely unserious fashion, aimed at spreading complacency over the dangers posed by the fascist in the White House.

He made no reference at all to Trump's efforts to undermine the legitimacy of the midterm election, including the lawsuit filed by the Department of Justice Thursday seeking to block certification of the vote in Alaska if incumbent Republican Senator Dan Sullivan loses his reelection bid.

He was similarly silent on the Trump administration's demand that the state of California set aside ballots cast by 20,000 voters whom the Department of Justice claims, without offering any proof, are non-citizens. Trump and Attorney General Todd Blanche have threatened state and local election officials with arrest and prison time if they do not comply with their unconstitutional orders.

Obama addressed El-Sayed's past criticism of his administration. "Abdul didn't like some things you did as president," he said, speaking for the critics. "You know who else doesn't agree with everything I do? Michelle Obama."

This lame joke covered over a serious political issue. In a 2012 column, El-Sayed wrote that Obama had "perpetuated war, violated our civil liberties, deported more people from our shores than any other president before him" and criticized his drone strikes in Pakistan and Yemen. During the current campaign, El-Sayed has repudiated those criticisms ("I was younger," he told NBC's *Meet the Press*) to reassure the Democratic Party leadership, which has now rallied behind him.

Obama's only reference to the Middle East was to criticize Trump's decision to go to war against Iran, not as a war of aggression in violation of international law, but as a strategic debacle: "We've run down our stock of missiles, dangerously low. And this is the thing, Iran now has veto power over the Strait of Hormuz where oil goes through to get to the world. So they're in a stronger strategic position now than before the war started."

He also made reference to Trump's anti-immigrant

policies, including the effective closure of the US-Mexico border to refugees, but only to tout his own record on that issue. "I believe we do need to make sure our border is orderly and secure," he said. "I believe that we want folks coming here lawfully. And in fact, when I was president, I got criticized by some Democratic allies for tightening up enforcement at the border."

It was Obama's ruthless attack on immigrants that earned him the shameful title of "deporter-in-chief" and paved the way for Trump to make anti-immigrant bigotry and ICE violence the political axis of his administration.

Obama went on to present the forced bankruptcy of General Motors and Chrysler in 2009 as "saving" the auto industry, without mentioning the massive wage and benefit cuts imposed on autoworkers or the subsequent destruction of jobs through layoffs and plant closings.

The weekend rallies thus demonstrated the inability of the corporate-controlled two-party system to offer any way forward for the working class. Both parties advocate imperialist war abroad and attacks on living standards and democratic rights at home. Their differences, however bitter, are largely confined to whether Iran or Russia should be the immediate focus of military aggression.

Trump and the Republicans propose to implement these policies through military-police dictatorship. The Democrats seek to use the trade union apparatus to suppress the class struggle. In both cases, their appeal is fundamentally directed to the financial oligarchy, which has pumped nearly \$5 billion into the midterm election, split roughly evenly between the two parties.

The objective logic of the struggles of the working class is to break out of the straitjacket of capitalist politics and to build an independent mass political movement based on a socialist and internationalist program. This requires the building of rank-and-file committees in factories, offices and other workplaces to begin this fight.



To contact the WSWS and the  
Socialist Equality Party visit:

**[wsws.org/contact](https://wsws.org/contact)**