

United States - Biden Mideast trip

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President Joe Biden's trip to Israel and Saudi Arabia, with a short three hour stop off with Palestinian Authority head Mahmoud Abbas sandwiched in between, began in Israel.

An article in the *New York Times* from Jerusalem said, "A year and a half after Donald J. Trump left the White House, Israeli leaders welcomed his successor with a rapturous embrace, as if to prove that their love affair with the former president would not stand in the way of a close relationship with the new president.

"As for Mr. Biden, he seemed just as determined to prove he took a back seat to no one in supporting Israel.

"At a red-carpet airport ceremony flush with fawning on both sides, Issac Herzog, Israel's president, called his American counterpart 'our brother Joseph' declaring that 'you are truly amongst family.' The country's interim prime minister, Yair Lapid, called Mr. Biden 'a great Zionist and one of the best friends Israel has ever known' ".

Trump, an anti-Semite, was a stalwart supporter of Israel, moving the U.S. embassy to Jerusalem, recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights captured from Syria in the 1967 war against the Arab countries and cutting off U.S. aid to the the Palestinian Authority (PA).

Biden kept all of these policies, except on this trip restoring U.S. aid to the PA.

Biden wanted to restore traditional Democratic support for Israel and its policies. In his public appearances he never mentioned Israeli control over 5 million Palestinians in the West Bank and Gaza, who have no say over Israeli policies there — making Israel, whose borders go from the Mediterranean Sea to the Jordan River, and from Egypt to Syria, a single apartheid state.

On this trip Biden attacked "some Democrats" who say that.

The only "difference" between Israel and Biden was over Iran. The Israelis want a preemptive strike against Iran's nuclear program. Biden said he was still for "diplomacy" for a new deal over Iran's nuclear program that was ditched by Trump.

However Washington has made adamant that it doesn't want to return to the old deal, but include such things as dismantling Iran's missile fleet, its only defense against an Israeli attack, ending its support of pro-Iranian groups in the region, etc. all of which Israel won't accept, as Biden well knows, which has ended the negotiations.

When asked if diplomacy fails would he use force against Iran, he said yes. So a "difference" without one.

Everything Biden said while in Israel made clear his 100 percent support to Israel and all its polices, and what he did not mention, too, like Israel's military control over the Palestinians, including daily murders of Palestinians in the West Bank and its periodic genocidal wars against Gaza.

There is a rift in the Democratic Party over its establishment's full support to Israel.

Another article in the *Times* written during Biden's trip was headlined "Democratic Primaries Are Embroiled in Debate Over Support to Israel". The article details how Democratic establishment candidates are being challenged by more progressive Democrats in many primaries over Israel's actions in the West Bank and Gaza, a view growing among younger voters.

This has caused alarm in the American-Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) the lobby group of the Israeli government in the U.S. For the first time, AIPAC is directly intervening in the U.S. elections, to support Democratic candidates who are 100 percent backers of Israel and its policies, and attack all others.

They and another group, Democratic Majority for Israel, have so far spent @21 million and \$7 million, respectively, in ads.

This rift is also expressed among American Jews, whom Israel no longer counts as its major backer in the U.S., but the antisemitic and racist white Christian evangelicals, who form a major block in Trump's base.

This group calls for Jews in the U.S. and world-wide to "return" to Israel, so that the Apocalypse can happen and all those Jews gathered in Israel who fail to convert to Christianity will "BURN IN HELL" as one of their spokesmen publicly shouted.

While in the West Bank Biden said he supports a "two state solution", which Israel has made impossible, as Biden full well knows.

His brief stopover to meet with Abbas was to reestablish U.S. aid to Abbas, to counter the widespread hatred of him in the West Bank.

The last time there was an election in the West Bank for the PA national leadership was in 2006. Abbas has been steadfast in refusing to allow new elections, because he knows he will lose.

This has been reflected in the 87-year-old Abbas's recent elevation of Hussein al-Sheikh to be his chosen successor. Al-Sheikh has been the PA's liaison with Israel to police the West Bank, the "spokesman for the occupation" for ordinary Palestinians.

Polls show, according to another article in the *Times* on al-Sheikh's elevation, if there was an election and al-Sheikh ran as the successor to Abbas, he would get three percent of the vote.

At Biden's press conference with Abbas, the latter was compelled by Palestinian outrage of the murder of renowned U.S. citizen and Palestinian-American journalist Shireen Abu Aqleh, to have a picture of her on an empty seat at the press conference.

She was deliberately shot by Israeli forces in May while she covered an Israeli military raid in the West Bank city of Jenin for Al Jazeera.

She was wearing a bulletproof vest marked "press" at the time, so the shooting had to be carefully aimed.

Many independent reviews of the killing, including one by the *Times*, and another by the United Nations, conclusively determined that the murder was by Israeli forces, and was deliberate.

But a U.S. investigation concluded only that it was "likely" from Israeli fire but ballistic tests were

inconclusive, and anyway it wasn't deliberate.

The Abu Aqleh family sent a letter to Biden before his trip, protesting Washington's "finding" and asking to meet with Biden.

The letter said the U.S. investigation was a "whitewash" of an "extra-judicial killing".

The family accused the White House of adopting the Israeli government's conclusions and talking points in "an apparent intent to undermine our efforts toward justice and accountability for Shireen's death."

Biden declined to meet with the family, and Secretary of State did, but there was no news from him on what he said.

Shireen's niece, Lina Abu Aqleh, said, "If Shireen was killed in Ukraine, I'm 100 percent sure the reaction would have been completely different. There would have been action from day one. There would have been accountability. There would have been a transparent and independent investigation. And there would have been justice."

U.S. Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib, a Palestinian-American, said, "This much is clear — the State Department has comprehensively failed to carry out its mission as it relates to the murder of an American citizen. This failure sends a clear message to the world: some American lives are worth more than others, and some 'allies' have license to kill with impunity."

Jewish Voice for Peace reports that a highly financed Political Action Committee has been set up specifically directed against Tlaib.

While in Israel, Biden didn't bring up her murder to Israeli authorities. He only mentioned her when embarrassed by her picture at the press conference with Abbas.

From there Biden went to Saudi Arabia, and met with the de facto ruler Crown Prince Mohammed bin Salman (MBS, known as "Mr. Bone Saw" for his ordering the murder and dismemberment of U.S.-based journalist Jamal Khashoggi in the Saudi embassy in Turkey).

As a result of that murder, Biden denounced MBS and broke relations with Saudi Arabia. But on this visit, he made no mention of Khashoggi, and said he would "reset" relations with the kingdom.

Biden came hat in hand to beg MBS to increase oil production to help him curb gasoline price inflation, and join hands against Iran. For the latter, Saudi Arabia was already a de facto partner in the military alliance of the U.S., Arab Emirates other kingdoms and dictators, and Israel against Iran.

As for oil production MBS explained that it would be for the next meeting of OPEC to decide prices — i.e. no promise.

The trip was a complete failure for Washington. MBS got what he wanted, a fist-bump from Biden, recognition, and promise to reset U.S.-Saudi relations, all of which was broadcast on Saudi TV as a triumph.

Biden's mideast trip ended with a whimper.

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