

# Harris, Trump, or Neither? Arab & Muslim Voters' Anger Grows

Friday 1 November 2024, by [MIAH Malik](#) (Date first published: 1 November 2024).

**AMONG THE MOST significant political developments in the 2024 presidential election is that Arab, Palestinian and Muslim communities are rejecting the party of President Joe Biden and Vice President Kamala Harris for their support of genocide in Gaza, Palestine, and Lebanon.**

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*At the ADC convention, a major question was what position to take to the 2024 election in light of Israel's war in Gaza. <https://jimwestphoto.com>*

Arab Americans see their families being bombed and slaughtered. While in the recent past they mostly voted Democratic, many reject the arguments of progressive liberals (and some socialist leftists) that critical support to Harris is better than "allowing Trump to win."

A revealing survey in Michigan indicates the deep anger of Palestinians, Arabs, and Muslims. The Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) last month published a survey that showed Green Party candidate Jill Stein leading Harris among Muslim voters in three battleground states, Arizona, Michigan and Wisconsin. (It's not clear whether the survey reflected the weight of African-American Muslims —ed.)

The Muslim Public Affairs Council also recently endorsed Stein, who was arrested this spring at a pro-Palestinian rally at Columbia University in New York.

She has visited Dearborn, Michigan several times during her campaign. Dearborn has a large Arab American population and has the first Arab American mayor in the country, Abdullah Hammoud, and is a center of pro-Palestinian opposition to Israeli's war.

Dearborn is part of the district that elected the only Palestinian American in Congress, Rashida Tlaib, and includes South Asian Muslims in a largely Black section of Detroit.

The CAIR survey found 40% of Michigan's Muslim-American voters plan to back Jill Stein, while 18% support Republican Donald Trump, 12% want Vice President Kamala Harris, and 4% plan to vote for independent candidate Cornel West, according to Michigan Public radio reporting.

## **Power of the “Uncommitted”**

In Michigan more than 100,000 voted “uncommitted” during the state’s February Democratic presidential primary. Biden was the winner in Michigan over Trump in 2020 with a 154,188-vote margin.

The uncommitted movement, aimed at pressuring the Democratic candidate to call for a permanent ceasefire and halt military aid to Israel, expanded to about 700,000 voters nationwide. But the Democratic National Convention refused a request for a single Palestinian-American delegate to speak.

CAIR’s statistics for Michigan were part of a national survey of 1,159 Muslim voters conducted August 25-27, after Vice President Kamala Harris accepted the Democratic nomination. Nationally, they found 29.4% of American Muslims planning to vote for Harris, 29.1% for Stein, 11.2% for Trump, 4.2% for Cornel West. A sizeable 16.5% were yet undecided, while 8.8% did not plan to vote.

Only Stein has ballot status on enough states to win the 270 Electoral College vote to become president. (Ballot exclusion of third parties is another subject of how the electoral system is legally rigged for the Democrats and Republicans.)

## **Appealing to Arab Communities**

While Harris has remained aligned with Biden’s support for Israel, Cornel West has worked to court Arab voters in Dearborn through roundtable meetings with donors and Muslim community leaders, as well as campaign stops to address the “catastrophe” in Gaza that drew hundreds in Dearborn, according to *Politico*.

Both West and Stein addressed the September 12-14 national convention of the American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC) in Dearborn, where many remain frustrated with their choices for president, according to the *Detroit Free Press*.

“It breaks my heart as a Democrat because I thought human rights matter for everyone,” Terry Ahwal, director of the ADC’s Michigan chapter told the news site. Harris is “better than Biden,” she said. “She’s using words like Palestinian dignity, but these are words when we continue to send weapons.”

“I’m still undecided and unhappy,” said Osama Siblani, publisher of the Dearborn-based *Arab American News*. Harris’ “speech during the DNC was not sufficient for me to make a decision. ... She’s not different, she’s part of the administration. She has made it very clear what she will do when she becomes president. ... And therefore, right now, Trump is not a choice, neither is Kamala Harris. But there are 60 days from today, and there is plenty of time for them.”

The CAIR survey found that 69.1% of American Muslims said they generally vote for the Democratic Party, but a staggering 94% said they disapprove of Biden’s job performance, with 98.2% dissatisfied with his handling of the conflict in Gaza.

“Despite this discontent, Muslim voters remain highly engaged, with 82.1% indicating they are ‘very likely’ to vote in the upcoming Presidential election,” CAIR reports.

That so many Arab Americans and Muslims — unlike the broader Black, Latino or Asian populations — reject Harris should not be a surprise. Tens of thousands of Palestinian Arabs have had family

members killed by Israel's criminal regime during the Biden-Harris tenure.

ADC, the largest Arab American civil rights group, usually holds its annual convention called "ArabCon" in Washington, D.C. or a nearby city, but this year decided to "come home" to Dearborn, which has the highest percentage of Arab American residents among U.S. cities.

As Michigan is a swing state, Arab American activists are seeking to lessen the unconditional support for Israel of the two main parties. The failure of that effort is why there is so little support for Harris or Trump.

### **"Hide Your Head in a Bag"**

Racist anti-Palestinian bias was on full display at a September 17 Senate hearing that was intended to discuss the massive increase in hate crimes targeting various communities, as well as the dehumanizing rhetoric that has fueled that increase.

The hearing was motivated, in part, by the horrific murder of six-year-old Wade Al Fayoumi and the shooting of three Palestinian students in Vermont. ADC had joined the Muslim Civic Coalition and partner organizations in calling for a hearing which would center and elevate Arab, Muslim, and, most importantly, Palestinian voices.

Republican members of the Committee immediately ignored the stated purpose of the hearing and focused on the discomfort of some Jewish university students.

Adding insult upon injury, Senator John Kennedy (R-LA) used his time to smear expert witness Maya Berry, Executive Director of the Arab American Institute, a Muslim Arab American woman.

Kennedy repeatedly declared that she supported terrorism and told her that she should "hide her head in a bag."

ADC National Executive Director Abed Ayoub said,

*"ADC is intimately familiar with the consequences of dehumanizing, demonizing rhetoric. While we had hoped for better, what we saw yesterday was a clear demonstration of how elected officials view Arab, Muslim, and Palestinian Americans.*

*"I am disgusted by the treatment of my fellow community leader, Maya Berry, who has worked tirelessly to support our community. There is no place for this level of disrespect anywhere — especially in Congress."*

### **Smear Against Rashida Tlaib**

The witchhunt against Palestinian voices and supporters also occurred on one of the country's largest news outlets. CNN hosts Jake Tapper and Dana Bash have performed a masterclass in journalistic malpractice — better described in this case as "lying."

Both anchors devoted concerted airtime to accusing Democratic Rep. Rashida Tlaib of antisemitism based on a comment they attributed to the Palestinian American member of Congress — a comment *she never came close to making.*

Anyone watching CNN's "State of the Union" with Tapper on Sunday, or "Inside Politics" with Dana Bash on Monday, would have heard that Tlaib questioned Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel's ability to fairly do her job because Nessel is Jewish.

It didn't matter to the primetime journalists that Tlaib's recent criticism of Nessel *did not in any way mention or refer to the attorney general's Jewish faith or identity*. Both are seen as progressive Democrats.

The lie stems from Tlaib's comments on Nessel's decision to prosecute 11 Gaza solidarity protesters from the University of Michigan. The student demonstrators are facing overreaching criminal charges for camping out on their own college campus to protest the funding of Israel's genocidal war.

"We've had the right to dissent, the right to protest," Tlaib told the *Detroit Metro Times*.

*"We've done it for climate, the immigrant rights movement, for Black lives, and even around issues of injustice among water shutoffs.*

*"But it seems that the attorney general decided if the issue was Palestine, she was going to treat it differently, and that alone speaks volumes about possible biases within the agency she runs."*

Tlaib's accusation of anti-Palestinian bias, which is institutionally rampant nationwide, was immediately twisted by Nessel into an alleged antisemitic attack. "Rashida should not use my religion to imply I cannot perform my job fairly as Attorney General. It's anti-Semitic and wrong," wrote Nessel on X.

This started the smear campaign picked up by CNN and others. CNN's Tapper did not follow basic journalistic standards like checking quotes, took it as given that Tlaib had accused Nessel of bias as a Jewish prosecutor. Said Tapper:

*"Congresswoman Tlaib is suggesting that she shouldn't be prosecuting these individuals that Nessel says broke the law and that she's only doing it because she's Jewish."*

The next day, CNN's Bash doubled down on the smear. Bash said without equivocation that Tlaib accused "the state's Jewish attorney general" of "letting her religion influence her job." Bash then called it a "sad reality" that Michigan governor Gretchen Whitmer failed to condemn this incident of anti-Semitism, which never occurred.

Not incredibly, Tapper and Bash kept going even as the *Metro Times* journalist Steve Neavling, whose interview set off the fracas repeatedly admonished them that Tlaib had said no such thing.

Neavling spent two days attempting to counteract the lies, tweeting at Tapper and Bash, and publishing an explicit fact-checking report in the *Metro Times*.

In a follow-up response to Bash's segment, Neavling wrote, "Now Dana Bash from CNN is lying about what happened. U.S. Rep. @RashidaTlaib did not say Nessel filed the charges because she's Jewish. She said there is an anti-Palestinian attitude among many institutions, and most of them are not run by Jewish people."

Even though it had been clearly established that Tlaib made *no such claim* about Nessel, a group of 21 House Democrats released a statement that "implying these cases are being handled unfairly due to her religious background is antisemitic, deeply disturbing, and unacceptable." Neither Biden nor Harris came to Tlaib's defense.

## The Black Vote

It is noteworthy that many Black people support the fight of Palestinians for self-determination. Whether a majority will vote, if they bother to vote, for Harris, it will not be enthusiastic.

Working-class Black people face low wages, inflation for basic commodities, health costs, and unaffordable housing. Democrats including Harris offer little relief. Harris has said she opposes any special programs for Black people, including reparations.

Harris nevertheless will get an overwhelming support from Black women, along with most Black men. Black elites use nationalist rhetoric to win Black political support for Democrats.

But there are many young Black people — men and women — who are uneasy with Biden-Harris support to Israel. Some even say, “Is Trump really a greater danger to freedom?”

The lesson of all bourgeois elections in imperialist countries is that fundamental change doesn't happen by presidential elections. Parties like the Greens explain this and use their candidates to speak truth to power.

Arab and Muslim communities in Michigan understand this better than other oppressed communities.

**Malik Miah**

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### **Arab American Voter Poll**

THE ARAB AMERICAN Institute has released a detailed [poll of Arab American voting intentions](#) for the presidential election, compared to the breakdown in 2020.

The poll confirms the enormous decline in support for the Democratic ticket in the wake of the Gaza genocide and the Biden administration's complicity. (While the poll was conducted before the Israeli offensive in Lebanon, the damage for the Democrats is probably even greater now.)

The poll suggests that any pro-Palestinian gesture by Kamala Harris — even symbolically allowing a Palestinian-American speaker at the Democratic convention — would significantly reduce the damage. The campaign's failure to show any sign of backing away from full-throated support for Israel's war speaks volumes, and may have a significant impact on the outcome.

The poll indicates third-party support among Arab American voters not exceeding about 12% — considerably less than the ADC and CAIR surveys, but still significant by historical comparison. The poll's important information and conclusions are worth checking out in full.

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**P.S.**

- Against the Current No. 233, November/December 2024. 1 November 2024:

<https://againstthecurrent.org/atc233/harris-trump-or-neither-arab-muslim-voters-anger-grows/>