

# [***Pelosi faces criticism for suggesting some pro-Palestinian protesters are connected to Russia***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B6R-P9W1-JBSS-S00V-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Former House Speaker Nancy Pelosi is facing criticism after suggesting some pro-Palestinian protesters are "connected to Russia."

"We have to think about what we're doing, and what we have to do is try to stop the suffering in Gaza ... but for them to call for a ceasefire is Mr. Putin's message," she said Sunday on CNN's "State of the Union," referring to Russian President Vladimir Putin. "Make no mistake, this is directly connected to what he would like to see."

The comments come as pro-Palestinian protesters demanding a ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war in Gaza have [*consistently interrupted*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/25/politics/biden-ceasefire-advocates-protests/index.html) President Joe Biden's events as well as Pelosi's own recent event in Seattle.

"I think ... some of these protesters are spontaneous and organic and sincere," Pelosi said. "Some, I think, are connected to Russia. And I say that having looked at this for a long time now, as you know."

When asked whether she thought some pro-Palestinian protests were Russian plants, the California Democrat responded, "I don't think they're plants."

"I think some financing should be investigated," Pelosi said, "and I want to ask the FBI to investigate that."

She swiftly received criticism from the head of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, Nihad Awad, who said the organization was "deeply disturbed" and called Pelosi's suggestion that the FBI investigate the protesters "downright authoritarian."

"We are deeply disturbed by Former House Speaker Pelosi's comments. Rep. Pelosi's claim that some of the Americans protesting for a Gaza ceasefire are working with Vladimir Putin sounds delusional and her call for the FBI to investigate those protesters without any evidence is downright authoritarian," Awad said in a statement.

"Her comments once again show the negative impact of decades of dehumanization of the Palestinian people by those supporting Israeli apartheid. Instead of baselessly smearing those Americans as Russian collaborators, former House Speaker Pelosi and other political leaders should respect the will of the American people by calling for an end to the Netanyahu government's genocidal war on the people of Gaza," the statement continued.

A spokesperson for Pelosi told CNN the former speaker "supported and defended" the right to peaceful protest but was acknowledging the history of foreign adversaries meddling in American ***politics*** to affect elections.

"Speaker Pelosi has always supported and defended the right of all Americans to make their views known through peaceful protest. Informed by three decades on the House Intelligence Committee, Speaker Pelosi is acutely aware of how foreign adversaries meddle in American ***politics*** to sow division and impact our elections, and she wants to see further investigation ahead of the 2024 election," the spokesperson said.

There is no reported evidence that Russia is linked to pro-Palestinian protests, but Russia and Russian-sponsored entities have been known to meddle in United States ***politics*** with the goal of sowing discord and affecting election outcomes.

A [*report released*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/03/16/politics/us-election-intel-report/index.html) by the US intelligence community in March 2021 detailed how the Russian government meddled in the 2020 election with an influence campaign "denigrating" Biden and "supporting" former President Donald Trump, citing a massive disinformation push.

Russian-troll farms such as the Internet Research Agency [*have been known*](https://www.cnn.com/2019/10/21/tech/russia-instagram-accounts-2020-election/index.html) to use social media to spread misinformation and encourage division in US ***politics*** by exploiting issues such as vaccine and mask mandates.

CNN's Avery Lotz, Haley Talbot and Dianne Gallagher contributed to this report.

By Aileen Graef, CNN

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