

# [***Trump allies visit Israel as former president offers few details on how he'd approach Gaza conflict***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BH0-D611-DY7V-G2PB-00000-00&context=1516831)

CNN Wire

March 7, 2024 Thursday 11:12 PM GMT

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**Length:** 846 words

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**Dateline:** (CNN)

**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; Allies of former [*President Donald Trump*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/president-donald-trump-45) held meetings with top officials in Israel last week to discuss the [*current conflict in Gaza*](https://www.cnn.com/middleeast/live-news/israel-hamas-war-gaza-news-03-07-24/index.html), according to three sources familiar with the trip.

The visit - led by Keith Kellogg, a leading national security adviser to the former president who also served in the Trump administration - comes as the [*presumptive Republican nominee*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/06/politics/trump-presumptive-nominee-analysis/index.html) has offered few specifics on how he would approach the war in Gaza, which has emerged in the US as a divisive political issue in a presidential election year. The group that visited Israel is set to deliver a trip report to interested parties, including the Trump campaign, in the coming week, the sources said.

It's unclear who in Trump's orbit was aware of the visit beforehand, but one Trump adviser told CNN the campaign learned about the trip after the fact. The visit included meetings with Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's minister of strategic affairs, Ron Dermer, and Knesset Speaker Amir Ohana, the sources said.

Kellogg made the trip in his current role as the co-chair of the America First Policy Institute and was accompanied by a handful of other national security experts from the think tank, which appears to be laying the groundwork for a second Trump administration.

One source familiar with the meetings said the group came away from the trip with the impression that a two-state solution was not on the table in the near term and that while Israel would favor a short-term halt in the fighting to get hostages freed, the current government is not interested in a long-term ceasefire.

Trump, who has revealed little so far on how he would approach the crisis, often says in campaign rallies and speeches that he was the most pro-Israel president in history.

Just days after the group returned, Trump was asked in an interview if he supported calls for a ceasefire in Gaza.

"Look, I hate seeing what's happening. Again, it would have never happened. This attack on Israel and likewise Israel's counterattack, which is what it is, would've never have happened if I was president," Trump said on Fox News, avoiding a direct answer.

Trump also appeared to back the Israel Defense Forces' conduct in Gaza, saying, "You've got to finish the problem."

On October 7, Hamas launched a deadly surprise attack on Israel. Israel responded with a brutal military campaign in Gaza - including a ground invasion and airstrikes - that has triggered an ongoing humanitarian crisis.

[*President Joe Biden*](https://www.cnn.com/politics/joe-biden) has [*faced intense backlash*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/02/26/politics/michigan-primary-uncommitted-biden-gaza/index.html) among Muslims, Arab Americans and progressive voters in the US over his public support for Israel as it conducts its operation in Gaza. More recently, Biden and his administration have [*adopted a tougher tone*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/03/05/politics/bidenofficials-deliver-a-tough-message-on-gaza-to-netanyahus-chief-political-foe/index.html) toward Israel, calling on Netanyahu and his government to ensure adequate humanitarian aid is flowing into the besieged enclave and to limit civilian causalities.

Some Trump allies say they see an opening with the growing discontent within Biden's coalition and the administration's response - particularly among voters who support Israel. But when Kellogg was in Israel, he was focused on policy, not ***politics***, sources said.

"The reality is that Biden's position on the war is prolonging the war. His administration is no longer acting with clarity and is creating daylight with our No. 1 ally, Israel," said Aryeh Lightstone, who served as a senior adviser to the Trump administration's ambassador to Israel and attended many of the meetings with Kellogg. "But Kellogg did not prod Israeli officials to engage with him in a partisan way. The conversations were very factual and policy-focused."

While Trump has positioned himself as a staunch ally of Israel, his personal relationship with the country's current leader has at times complicated the former president's public comments on the crisis.

The firm friendship between Trump and Netanyahu while Trump was in office has since soured, largely driven by animosity the former president held for Netanyahu ever since the prime minister publicly acknowledged that Biden won the 2020 election.

In the months that followed, Trump accused Netanyahu of disloyalty and [*fumed to Axios*](https://www.axios.com/2021/12/10/trump-netanyahu-disloyalty-fuck-him), "F\*\*\* him."

Trump upset some advisers and allies when he [*lashed out at Netanyahu*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/12/politics/trump-criticizes-netanyahu-hamas-attack/index.html) just days after the terror attack in Israel, saying during a campaign rally in Florida that the prime minister was caught unprepared by Hamas' attack.

Trump also claimed Israel declined to participate in the 2020 airstrike that killed top Iranian general [*Qasem Soleimani*](https://www.cnn.com/2020/01/03/asia/soleimani-profile-intl-hnk/index.html), saying Netanyahu "let us down."

Trump faced intense backlash following those remarks, and he and his allies have continued to highlight Trump's positions on Israel while in office, including the signing of the Abraham Accords normalizing diplomatic relations between Israel and certain Arab countries; moving the US embassy to Jerusalem from Tel Aviv; and recognizing the Golan Heights as being under Israeli sovereignty.

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**Load-Date:** March 7, 2024

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