

# [***Opinion: Many Muslim voters no longer see Trump as worse than Biden***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6B8B-HGM1-DY7V-G055-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Body**

(CNN) &#8212; In a different world, President Joe Biden's decision Thursday to sanction certain Israeli settlers involved in violence against West Bank Palestinians might be meaningful. In the world we live in, confrontingthe shocking violence by the Israel Defense Forces in its war on Gaza that Biden has [*enabled, empowered and endorsed*](https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts), it's a particularly severe instance of far too little and far too late.

From [*young voters*](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-us-canada-67808808) to [*Black Christians*](https://www.nytimes.com/2024/01/28/us/politics/black-pastors-biden-gaza-israel.html), many people in solidly Democratic constituencies are reconsidering backing Biden because of his support for Israel. American Muslims might be among the most disillusioned of all. Over the last two decades, we've [*mostly backed Democrats*](https://www.pewresearch.org/religion/2017/07/26/political-and-social-views/). In the last few months, I've talked ***politics*** with hundreds of my fellow Muslims. Though not voting for Biden will effectively mean voting for former President Donald Trump if he wins the GOP nomination, I can count on one finger how many Muslims have said they are still riding with Biden.

After the undeniably awful October 7 attacks Hamas perpetrated on Israelis, Biden could have chosen to pursue a response that acknowledged history and weighed Israeli and Palestinian lives equally. Instead, he has overseen what former State Department advisor Wa'el Alzayat called "[*an illogical disaster*](https://time.com/6589598/biden-israel-gaza-failure/)," offering [*tepid, toothless criticism*](https://www.nbcnews.com/politics/national-security/biden-talking-tougher-continues-aid-israeli-war-effort-rcna125153) of Israel's military tactics while [*continuing to ship arms*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/12/08/politics/state-department-congress-tank-munitions-sale/index.html) and provide diplomatic cover for a war that has [*killed more than 27,000*](https://www.cnn.com/2024/01/29/middleeast/unrwa-funding-israel-war-mime-intl/index.html) in just months. These numbers are collected by Gaza's Ministry of Health, which is part of Hamas' government in Gaza, and their statistics have been relied upon by the United Nations.

For the American Muslims I've spoken to, it's impossible to overlook these choices. Biden was not compelled to pursue the policies he has. The world is suffering the consequences, and we are now seeing an escalation in bias and bigotry in our own country.

Amina Barhumi, executive director of the [*Ohio chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations*](https://cair-ohio.com/cair-ohio-raises-alarm-over-dramatic-surge-in-islamophobic-incidents-linked-to-ongoing-crisis-in-middle-east/), told me about a surge in anti-Muslim "hate crimes, assaults and discriminatory incidents" since October 7. Reports of such incidents rose 172% nationwide year-over-year, she said, with a "600% increase into CAIR-Ohio offices in the four weeks" after October 7. She charged that "one-sided statements from our elected officials" about the conflict contributed to those numbers.

Across the US, Muslims have faced violence including at Columbia University, where students protesting about Gaza were [*targeted with a chemical agent*](https://theintercept.com/2024/01/22/columbia-university-palestine-protest-skunk/), according to reporting from The Intercept. In Georgia, a young student's teacher allegedly [*threatened to behead her*](https://www.wlbt.com/2023/12/15/teacher-allegedly-threatened-behead-muslim-student/?outputType=apps). Three Palestinian college students were shot in Vermont, [*one paralyzed for life*](https://www.npr.org/2023/12/03/1216852611/palestinian-student-shot-in-vermont-is-paralyzed-from-chest-down-his-family-says). A mother, Hanaan Shahin, was brutally attacked in her own home; badly injured, she survived, but her 6-year-old son, Wadea Al Fayoume, [*was stabbed 26 times*](https://www.cnn.com/2023/10/16/us/chicago-muslim-boy-stabbing-investigation/index.html) and died.

When people ask me how American Muslims can abandon Biden in the face of Trump, I wonder if they see what we do. I wonder how anyone would make sense of the incredible moral discrepancies at work.

Like many American Muslims, I'm in favor of a ceasefire in Gaza followed by a serious commitment, at long last, to a meaningful and fair process that provides Palestinians peace, security and dignity. Instead, through our government's largely uncritical support for Israel, the US is propelling a violent military operation cheered on by openly [*eliminationist rhetoric*](https://www.theguardian.com/world/2024/jan/03/israeli-public-figures-accuse-judiciary-of-ignoring-incitement-to-genocide-in-gaza) that would face many more obstacles without determined American support.

In so doing, Biden has seemingly abandoned even the pretense of neutrality, which the US should be committed to defending. It's morally outrageous. It's also strategically bonkers. We benefit from international institutions, too, after all. So this approach isn't just unprincipled. It's perilous. Many analysts [*warned Biden's policies*](https://prospect.org/world/2024-01-31-avoidable-middle-east-war/) risked American lives; with the recent attack in Jordan, killing three of our soldiers and injuring many more, we are entering ever more worrying territory.

Credible observers warn of [*the conflagration spreading further*](https://thesoufancenter.org/intelbrief-2024-january-29/), putting more American lives and resources on the line. As far as I know, no Americans voted for this chaos and conflict. Most Americans, including half of Republicans, [*back a ceasefire*](https://www.reuters.com/world/us-public-support-israel-drops-majority-backs-ceasefire-reutersipsos-2023-11-15/), according to a Reuters/Ipsos poll. Yet Biden has time and again declined to use the United States' enormous leverage to promote de-escalation.

Have we learned nothing from our recent history? After the September 11, 2001 terrorist attacks, our elites led us into [*trillions of dollars' worth of short-sighted, sometimes disastrous responses*](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/), worst of all in Iraq. A nation that [*posed no credible direct threat to us*](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-64980565) was [*invaded on false premises*](https://www.nytimes.com/2020/01/29/magazine/iraq-weapons-mass-destruction.html). Thousands of Americans and roughly [*300,000 Iraqis*](https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/costs/human/civilians/iraqi) died, and no one was held responsible.

Biden, then a US senator chairing the Foreign Relations Committee, voted in [*support of the resolution authorizing the US invasion of Iraq*](https://www.vox.com/policy-and-politics/2019/10/15/20849072/joe-biden-iraq-history-democrats-election-2020) and has hardly acknowledged his culpability in that catastrophe. Worse still, he might not believe he has to.

We Americans deserve better. We should demand better, too. For a long time, establishment Democrats wielded Trump like a threat. If you don't vote for us, they warned, you're voting for him. But if these Democrats were really concerned about what Trump represented, they'd draw a clearer contrast. If they can't convince us to vote for Biden, that's on the party - not on the voters. Biden had a preview of what he can expect when he visited Michigan on Thursday.

Despite having just issued his executive order against violent Israeli settlers, he was treated to diminished representation from the American Muslim community, which is a considerable voting bloc in the Midwest swing state's electorate. Days before Biden's visit, [*local Muslim leaders*](https://www.detroitnews.com/story/news/politics/2024/02/01/joe-biden-uaw-michigan-macomb-county-arab-voters-tensions-israel-gaza-hamas-war-dearborn-palestine/72423409007/) were among those who cancelled a meeting with the president's campaign manager. In December of last year, Muslim leaders gathered in [*Dearborn, Michigan*](https://www.cnn.com/2021/11/06/us/dearborn-michigan-arab-american-mayor-trnd/index.html) - the city with the [*largest per capita Muslim population*](https://www.politico.com/news/2023/09/20/dearborn-michigan-abdullah-hammoud-00116900) in the US - to officially launch an effort to "[*Abandon Biden*](https://www.politico.com/news/2023/12/02/swing-state-muslim-leaders-biden-00129758)."

A second Trump presidency would be difficult, even harrowing. But I believe the United States can survive four more years of Trump. I'm less certain we can survive four more years of so-called good guys who act so clearly otherwise.

Opinion by Haroon Moghul

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