

# [***Joe Biden Just Had His 'Charlottesville' Moment***](https://advance.lexis.com/api/document?collection=news&id=urn:contentItem:6BVY-68S1-JBR6-917Y-00000-00&context=1516831)

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**Byline:** Khaleda Rahman

**Highlight:** The president said he condemned "antisemitic protests" on college campuses and also those "who don't understand what's going on with the Palestinians."

**Body**

President [*Joe Biden*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/joe-biden?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s latest remarks about pro-Palestinian protests sparked a backlash on social media, with some saying it was Biden's "Charlottesville moment."

When a reporter asked the president if he condemned the "antisemitic protests" occurring on college campuses, Biden said: "I condemn the antisemitic protests. That's why I've set up a program to deal with that."

He added: "I also condemn those who don't understand what's going on with the Palestinians...and how they're being...."

Israel launched its war after [*Hamas*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/hamas?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)' October 7 attack on southern Israel, which killed 1,200 people, while some 250 others were taken hostage. In the six months since, Israel has killed more than 34,000 Palestinians in Gaza, and at least two-thirds of the dead are women and children, The Associated Press reported, citing the local health ministry.

[*Students are protesting on college campuses*](https://www.newsweek.com/columbia-university-lockdown-cancels-classes-protests-1892631?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) across the country, and demanding their schools divest from companies with ties to Israel. Some reports of Jewish students being harassed amid the protests have led to allegations of antisemitism.

Students and officials at Columbia University, where more than 100 students were arrested last week after refusing to leave their encampment on the campus lawn, have said such incidents have involved people [*not affiliated with the university*](https://www.newsweek.com/columbia-protest-antisemitism-allegations-1892698?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Biden's remarks on Monday sparked comparisons to former president [*Donald Trump*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/donald-trump?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships)'s comment saying there were [*"very fine people on both sides"*](https://www.newsweek.com/2019/08/09/charlottesville-donald-trump-speech-terry-mcauliffe-1451610.html?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) after a a violent white nationalist rally in Charlottesville, Virginia, in 2017.

*Newsweek* has contacted the White House for comment via email.

"President Biden says there are good people on both sides of October 7," Mollie Hemingway, the editor-in-chief of The Federalist, [*wrote on X*](https://twitter.com/MZHemingway/status/1782498275246948411), formerly [*Twitter*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/twitter?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships).

Joe Walsh, a former congressman, [*wrote*](https://twitter.com/WalshFreedom/status/1782508206268530976) that it was a "bad, weak, cowardly answer."

He added: "Know the time & place. Right now, Jewish students are being harassed & threatened on college campuses. Just condemn THAT. Have the courage right now not to 'both sides' this issue and condemn ONLY what's happening to Jewish students. And he didn't."

Stephen Miller, a former Trump adviser, wrote that Biden "condemns \*opponents\* of Hamas."

Others criticized Biden for labeling the protests as antisemitic when Jewish students are participating in them.

"Oh God. Biden just called the college protests, which all have anti-Zionist Jewish students, antisemitic," Joshua Hill [*wrote on X*](https://twitter.com/JoshuaPHilll/status/1782498626021015590).

Howard Beckett [*wrote*](https://twitter.com/BeckettUnite/status/1782655716915880247): "Students across campuses in the US are protesting for an end to the [Palestinian] genocide & for a boycott of Israel. Their movement includes Christians, Muslims, Jews & atheists. Here Biden calls them 'antisemitic.' Biden is a partner to apartheid & genocide."

Some suggested Biden's remarks could hurt him in November's election.

"Going to be really interesting when Biden tells all the kids he called antisemitic - and told their administrators call the cops on them - to vote for him to avoid fascism," one person wrote on X.

Thomas Gift, who heads the Centre on U.S. ***Politics*** at University College London, told *Newsweek* that "anything Biden says at the moment on Israel-Palestine is going to be parsed, scrutinized, reinterpreted, taken out of context, and pulled through the ringer by critics a million different ways.

"There's no winning on the issue even in the most carefully crafted press release."

Off-the-cuff remarks "only open him up to an avalanche of even more political fallout," Gift said. "For Biden right now, the optimal strategy is to avoid freewheeling on the subject and let his communications team do the talking."

Biden has frequently said that Trump's remarks after the deadly Charlottesville rally were what convinced him to run for president. "It was a wake up call for us as a country and for me, a call to action," he said in 2020. "At that moment, I knew I'd have to run."

Trump, the presumptive [*Republican*](https://www.newsweek.com/topic/republican?utm_source=Synacor&utm_medium=Attnet&utm_campaign=Partnerships) nominee facing Biden in a rematch of the 2020 election in November, had said both sides were at fault for the violence in Charlottesville after a man plowed his car into a group of counter-protesters, killing a woman.

"We condemn in the strongest possible terms this egregious display of hatred, bigotry and violence on many sides, on many sides," Trump said, sparking anger for appearing to equate the actions of the counter-protesters with those of the white nationalists. He drew further criticism when he later said there "were very fine people on both sides."

[*Link to Image*](https://d.newsweek.com/en/full/2382129/president-joe-biden-deliver-remarks.jpg)

**Graphic**

President Joe Biden deliver remarks

Celal Gunes/Anadolu via Getty Images

President Joe Biden deliver remarks on Earth Day event at Prince William Forest Park in Virginia on April 22, 2024. The president drew backlash for comments where he condemned "antisemitic protests" on college campuses and also those "who don’t understand what’s going on with the Palestinians."

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