

Joe Biden's Policy on Israel Isn't "Transformative" or "Decent"

By [Rima Najjar](#)

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*Many are noting happily that **Joe Biden's** flurry of executive orders are "surprisingly" progressive ... and decent. In an [essay](#) in Jacobin titled 'If Joe Biden Moves Left, You Can Thank the Left', Lisa Featherstone acknowledges that, though "deeply implicated in much of what is wrong with America and the world today," Biden nevertheless appears to be doing the right thing. She assigns credit for Biden's decisive departures from the old to: "the organized left, which has helped transform US politics."*

No such transformation appears to be on the horizon for Palestine and the "Middle East" in general. And, as far as I am concerned, you can blame the left for that.

The new Israeli envoy to Washington **Gilad Erdan**, whose appointment coincided with Biden's inauguration, is certainly not "turning the page on Trump era" as a headline in The Hill stated, belying the content of the [article](#):

Israel's opposition to the U.S. engaging with Iran will be bolstered by key ties in Washington with Yousef Al Otaiba, the United Arab Emirates's envoy in the U.S., and Bahrain's ambassador to the U.S. Abdullah Bin Mohammad Bin Rashed Al Khalifa—relationships formally brokered by the Trump administration under the agreement known as the Abraham Accords.

... Antony Blinken, Biden's nominee for secretary of State, said during his Senate confirmation hearing on Tuesday that he and the president are "resolutely opposed" to the [BDS] movement and that it "unfairly and inappropriately singles out Israel, it promotes a double standard and a standard we do not apply to other countries.

Why do I blame the left? In her book *The Israeli Radical Left: An Ethics of Complicity*, Fiona Wright gives us a complete picture about "the ambivalences" that attend anti-occupation, anti-colonial activism in Israel and participation in state violence against Palestinians.

Similarly, these complexities are entrenched in the organized left in the United States.

Take, for example, the [account](#) in The Atlantic describing the controversy over anti-Israel statements in the Movement for Black Lives 2016 political platform:

Jewish groups have been most upset about its use of the words "genocide" and "apartheid" to describe Israel's actions against the Palestinians, [describing](#) the terms as "offensive and odious." Some progressive, social-justice-oriented organizations have condemned the statements in part; others have

condemned the movement in full. Church groups have [repudiated](#) it. Jews of color have [struggled](#) with it. In the wake of what should have been a powerful moment, black activists have found themselves at odds with the one group [American Jews] that may have been most ready to support them as allies.

Emma Green, the writer of The Atlantic article, goes on to describe the conflict between Jews and blacks in America as “largely one of language, but this is also a conflict of history...a sign of how thoroughly elements of these groups have become alienated from one another—hoping for justice, but hearing different things when they try to speak its language.”

In 2016, commenting on the conflict that erupted over Black support of Palestinians, Janaé Bonsu, co-director of the Chicago-based activist group Black Youth Project 100, had this to say: “We remain unequivocally supportive of Palestine and critical of Israel, but I don’t think that precludes Jewish people who are pro-Israel from supporting other aspects of the platform.”

Among so many otherwise progressive or liberal Americans, core convictions about the legitimacy of Israel as a Jewish state, now ensconced comfortably on all of the Palestinian homeland, allows them to repudiate Palestinian movements for justice and place their energies, instead, into digging for “coded” anti-Semitism in anti-Zionist speech.

When Joe Biden or Nancy Pelosi speak the language of Martin Luther King and call for “accountability, truth and justice,” as we have heard them do recently, they are still conditioning their solidarity with Black Lives Matter and commitment to universal justice on the repudiation of Palestinian human rights.

The same image below, which is used by the Zionist so-called Foundation for the Defense of Democracy to portray the Palestinian-led boycott movement (BDS) as an “economic warfare campaign targeting Israel” and to present “policy recommendations for the U.S. government to consider,” in fact represents the history of Palestine’s cry for justice from 1948 to the present.

They are hearing different things from us Palestinians about justice and fairness when they try to speak the language of justice. They are hearing (and balking at) “de-legitimize Israel as a Jewish state in Palestine” rather than hearing “Justice for Palestine.”

President Biden is doing a lot of feel-good things by setting right some of Trump’s more egregious doings. We are a little giddy with relief, making affectionate fun of Sanders’ mittens, and not thinking about what it means to us as a nation that there is no room for Sanders (remember how feverish with hope he made us feel for a moment during the primaries?) as secretary of labor at Biden’s table. We are not thinking what it means that AOC’s fellow Democrats froze her out (in a secret ballot) of a position on the House Energy and Commerce Committee.



Collage used by Zionist [organization](#) to portray the BDS movement as “war” (Source: Rima Najjar)

[Speaking](#) “as a member of the left,” Chris Hedges had this to say in an interview on New Economic Thinking, Jan 19, 2021:

I speak as a member of the left ... we must build real relationships with the oppressed. I think the danger is that the oppressed become an abstraction... one of the things I’ve liked about the George Floyd protests is that, number one it skews young, it has been led by people of color, by people who have come out of the experience of urban oppression and police terror and know what they are talking about. I think there has been a political sophistication on the part of many people in the streets ... because I worked in Gaza, because I worked in central America, because I teach in a prison and have taught in a prison for ten years ... I have close relationships with people who have suffered the brunt of that oppression and I think that keeps you honest. I can’t walk out of that prison knowing that but for Clinton and Biden half of my students wouldn’t be in prison and then vote for Biden; I can’t spend months of my life in Gaza and then, as I did in 2016, listen to Barack Obama give a speech to AIPAC, which might as well have been written and was probably by AIPAC, and then betray the Palestinians ... the only thing that will save us is standing unequivocally with the people who have been crushed and demonized and oppressed by this system ... in the short term, it may seem counter-productive but in the long term it gives us a kind of credibility, which I see slipping away by essentially selling ourselves out. That’s what worries me, that’s what’s dangerous because ... if you don’t stand up for these values ... you have a population or a significant portion of that population, not only turn on that feckless, spineless liberal class, but eventually turn on the same purported values they support, which I do support and I think are important.

The fact remains, I am afraid, that Pelosi and Schumer, no less than McConnell, are both under the thumb of the billionaire class. That’s who they ultimately serve, which is why the left must step up its act on *all* issues of social justice and fairness.

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Rima Najjar is a Palestinian whose father’s side of the family comes from the forcibly depopulated village of Lifta on the western outskirts of Jerusalem and whose mother’s side of the family is from Ijzim, south of Haifa. She is an activist, researcher and retired professor

of English literature, Al-Quds University, occupied West Bank.

Featured image is from Palestine Solidarity Campaign

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