

“Abandon Biden” hosts town hall aimed at promoting Democratic Party

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On June 13, the recently created pressure group “Abandon Biden” held an online presidential forum that it presented as an opportunity to hear from candidates opposed to the genocide in Gaza. Its central purpose, however, was to promote the Democratic Party and the capitalist two-party system.

The event featured three candidates for US president: Jill Stein (Green Party), Cornel West (independent) and Claudia De la Cruz (Party for Socialism and Liberation-PSL). Socialist Equality Party candidate Joseph Kishore reported that the organizers ignored repeated requests from the SEP campaign to participate.

The deliberate decision by Abandon Biden not to invite Kishore reflects the upper-middle class and Democratic Party politics of the group.

Abandon Biden was founded in November 2023 after the Biden administration failed to call for a ceasefire in Gaza by October 31, the deadline the organizers had given for this action. The entire purpose of the group, as explained by its founding members, has been to punish Biden, the individual, by withholding votes for him in the November 2024 election.

In repeated interviews and in last week’s town hall, representatives from the group made clear they were not opposed to the Democratic Party as a whole. Before bringing on De la Cruz, an Abandon Biden representative revealed that the group had endorsed and raised funds for Jen Perelman. Perelman is a Florida Democrat who was previously endorsed by businessman Andrew Yang and is attempting, for the second time, to unseat the Democratic incumbent, Representative Debbie Wasserman-Schultz.

The co-chair of the national Abandon Biden campaign is Dr. Hassan Abdel Salam, who previously taught at the University of Minnesota. In an interview with the *Minneapolis Star Tribune* earlier this year, Abdel Salam said the group was organizing in nine states in order to send a message to Biden that “defending genocide could lead to your defeat, so beware.” He continued, “That’s my goal ... promote the message throughout the nation and ensure it’s a consistent one.”

Several of the board members are associated with the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), which hailed the election victory of Biden in 2020 and praised Biden for “building an inclusive election campaign focused on the unity of our nation.” This includes Sadia Tarannum, a digital product consultant and board member of the Minnesota chapter of CAIR, and Jaylani Hussein, the executive director of CAIR in Minnesota.

Khalid Turaani is also a board member of Abandon Biden and was recently hired on by CAIR-Ohio to be its new executive director, overseeing operations in Columbus, Cincinnati and Dayton. In a June press release announcing the hiring of Turaani, CAIR touted his

“more than 15 years of executive experience in public affairs and advocacy in Washington, D.C., and Europe ... along with a decade-long tenure as CEO in the private sector.”

Finally, Rabiul Chowdhury, 28, is the co-chair of the national Abandon Biden movement and its Pennsylvania chapter. Chowdhury is a member of CAIR-Philadelphia executive committee and currently works as a “corporate auditor and risk manager” at SAP. Chowdhury also currently serves as a member of Pennsylvania Democratic Governor Josh Shapiro’s “Advisory Commission on Asian American and Pacific Islander Affairs.”

Dr. Abdel Salam’s opening report at the forum made clear the outlook of the organization. He explained that the goal of the group was “to punish Biden and get the blame or the credit” for him losing the election.

He claimed that this would “increase the power of people of conscience and ensure that genocide will never be again on the ballot.” He claimed that by punishing Biden, a “reckoning” will happen in the Democratic Party that will ensure “that we have a more pro-Palestinian, anti-genocide party by 2028, and that the Republicans swing in our direction when they see the power lies in the hands of these groups, people of conscience in the swing states.”

He encouraged “our fellow Americans to join us ... as we work hard to transform the Democratic Party and to bring Republicans towards declaring peace and the end of occupation.” He concluded his remarks by calling on our “allies from all backgrounds, Gen Z, Latinos, progressives” and “libertarians to end the brutal autocracy.”

Responding to these statements, SEP presidential candidate Kishore wrote on X as the forum was happening that its perspective is to “Abandon Biden, but above all keep faith in the Democratic Party, the Republican Party and the capitalist two-party system!”

The policy of the Biden administration in arming, financing and politically justifying the genocide is not a “mistake,” it is an expression of the interests of the American ruling class. And it is part of a global war, including the US-NATO war against Russia, which goes completely unmentioned.

None of the presidential candidates who participated challenged the basic orientation of the organizers. Indeed, while running as independent candidates, their own perspective is essentially the same as Abandon Biden.

In her comments, PSL candidate Claudia De la Cruz attacked “US capitalism” and “US imperialism” and pointed to the bourgeois

nationalist regime in Cuba as an “example of what socialism could look like, especially in the core of the empire.” She lamented that “we cannot fight” the threat of fascism “with a Democratic Party that is more willing to concede to genocide and more willing to concede to conservative politics than to actually allow any type of progressive advancement within the party.”

The PSL and De la Cruz have participated in the organization of protests aimed at appealing to the war criminals responsible for the genocide in Gaza.

The PSL and its many offshoots, including BreakThrough News and the ANSWER Coalition, organized the “People’s Conference for Palestine” in Detroit last month, which featured as a “special guest” Democratic Representative Rashida Tlaib.

Tlaib, like every other Democrat, voted in favor of over \$61 billion in military funding to Ukraine and repeatedly voted to install as speaker of the House New York Rep. Hakeem Jeffries, an ardent supporter of Israel.

In his contribution, Cornel West said his campaign was about reintroducing “America to the best of itself,” which for him “begins with the Black Freedom Movement.” West emphasized, as he does in almost every appearance, that he starts “on the chocolate side of town.”

West’s appearance at the town hall came less than 10 days after he participated in a nearly two-hour-long interview with right-wing commentator Mario Nawfal. West spent most of the interview appealing for support from the Nawfal’s fascistic audience by touting his opposition to Karl Marx and scientific socialism and his support for closed borders and capitalism.

Speaking at the town hall, West stressed his support for identity politics. He said his campaign was different than the others because “I make white supremacy very, very crucial and central to my campaign.” As far as ending the genocide, West opined “that’s a sign of an empire in profound spiritual decay and moral decadence ... we have to be able to reintroduce America to the best of itself.”

West’s perspective is that somehow the ruling class and its parties will come to see the light through some sort of process of moral renewal.

For her part, Stein thanked the organizers of Abandon Biden for their “incredible courage to really confront the fundamental corruption of our political system, which is really captured by empire in a way that Gaza is the, you know, really kind of the essential and just a tragic example of, but the problem is not limited to Gaza.”

In her interview, Stein advanced the middle-class reformist politics of the Green Party, including advocating the passage of legislation that would “clean” the US political system.

Inadvertently revealing the futility and limited character of her perspective and that of the Green Party, Stein, as an example, said:

I was part of a coalition that passed campaign finance reform. ... We passed it through a large coalition. ... And what happened, the progressive so-called Democratic Party in Massachusetts repealed the law on a voice vote.

But you know, that is, the possibility is still there.

As a capitalist politician, the only time the word “socialism” came up in her interview is when Stein hailed the Green Party’s previous “coalitions” with “the Democratic Socialists,” a faction of the Democratic Party.

In terms of US foreign policy, Stein ignored the role of the Greens in Germany and Australia in backing US imperialist wars, especially in Ukraine. In Germany, where the Greens are part of the coalition government, Foreign Minister and Green Party member Annalena Baerbock has justified arming Ukraine with advanced weapons and heavy battle tanks under the banner of “human rights.”

In her comments, Stein said current US foreign policy is “based on military might rather than, you know, it needs to be international law, human rights, and diplomacy. That should be the basis of foreign policy.”

There is enormous anger among millions of workers and youth, many of whom may have previously voted for Joe Biden, over his and the Democratic Party’s unwavering support for the genocide in Gaza. In order to end the genocide, however, this anger must be channeled and harnessed towards eliminating the source of the genocide—the capitalist system.

US-NATO support for Israel’s “final solution” of the “Palestinian question” is not a “mistake” or the result of the “moral decay” of this or that individual. It is an expression of the material class interests of the American ruling class, which sees the colonization and subjugation of Gaza as integral to its future plans for the region and the world. This includes expanding the US-NATO global war against Russia, with future conflict against Iran and China.

The only social force capable of putting a stop the genocide and American imperialism’s plans for World War III is the working class, united on an anti-capitalist, internationalist and socialist program against all capitalist politicians and governments.

By excluding SEP presidential candidate Joseph Kishore from the town hall, the organizers of Abandon Biden sought to block this revolutionary perspective from the over 600 people who attended the online event. In doing so, as Kishore noted, the organizers revealed that they are “oriented not to the working class, but to the Democratic Party and the capitalist state—that is, the perpetrators of the genocide.”



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