

Analysts say Donald Trump's hard-line support for Israel aimed at Evangelical base



Washington, September 2 (RHC)-- U.S. President Donald Trump's recent push to earn the backing of Jewish voters is proving to be a difficult struggle, but his hard-line support for Israel may be aimed at appealing to Evangelical Christians and boost his chances of re-election in 2020, experts and politicians say.

Experts say that Trump's goal of aligning himself squarely behind the policies of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and attacking on those who oppose him, is to rally evangelical Christians, not Jewish voters.

"It is about pandering to his base of voters. And the base voters, the Trump voters who care about this issue are, the vast majority, Republicans, Christians and in many cases fundamentalist evangelicals," Logan Bayroff, spokesman for J Street, a left-wing pro-Israel group in Washington, told the The Hill newspaper.

"Trump [is] expressing frustration that while the evangelical community is on board with his far-right policies ... the vast majority of Jewish voters are disgusted by it, broadly disgusted by Trump [and] are

going to vote against him and his party," he added.

Evangelical Christians, a loyal voter base for Trump, believe only intense conflict in the Middle East and the gathering of Jews in Israel is a prerequisite for the return of Jesus.

"It seems pretty obvious that everything the president does is meant to cater to his base," said US Representative Ted Deutch, a Democrat from Florida.

"Given that his base is 40 percent of the American people or less, I guess we'll have to see if that's a good political judgment," he added. "But clearly there was no thought about trying to win over some of the three-quarters of the members of the Jewish community who voted against him in the last election."

Trump recognized Jerusalem al-Quds as Israel's capital in December 2017 and signed a proclamation in March recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, Syrian territory.

"He's clearly in tune with making these decisions and making policies toward Israel and talking about Israel in a way that aligns with the end times, rapture ideas of a portion of his base," Bayroff of J Street said.

"He probably doesn't really believe it . But ... I think he's using that language because he knows it resonates with the people who already like him."

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