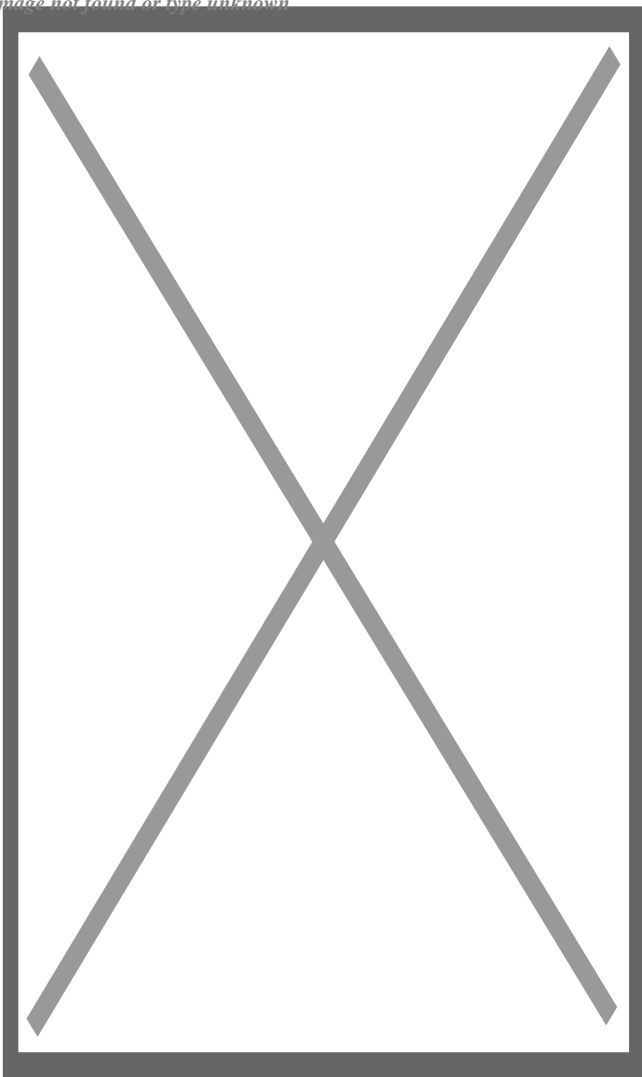


Former Obama adviser says more Palestinian kids should die in Islamophobic rant

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New York, November 22 (RHC)-- A former senior U.S. official is facing a backlash after harassing a halal food vendor in New York.

Stuart Seldowitz, who previously served as deputy director of the United States Department of State's Office of Israel and Palestinian Affairs, was captured on video taunting and threatening the vendor in Manhattan. Amid the apparent argument over the ongoing Gaza war, he told his adversary that more Palestinian children should die.

"If we killed 4,000 Palestinian kids, it wasn't enough," Seldowitz says calmly in one exchange captured on video and posted on the social media platform X.

In other exchanges, he's heard casting slurs against Prophet Muhammad. He also threatens to use his government connections to mobilise Egypt's secret police against the vendor, who he accuses of being a "terrorist."

"The Mukhabarat in Egypt will get your parents. Does your father like his fingernails? They'll take them out one by one," Seldowitz says smiling.

The vendor is heard repeatedly asking him to leave and telling him he does not speak English.

Seldowitz says the vendor's lack of English fluency shows he is "ignorant." "You should learn English, it'll help you when they deport you back to Egypt and the Mukhabarat wants to interview you," he tells the vendor with a grin.

Seldowitz reportedly had a distinguished career with the State Department. He also served on the National Security Council's South Asia Directorate under then-President Barack Obama and went on to become foreign affairs chair at New York lobbying firm Gotham Government Relations, according to a 2022 press release from the company.

The former diplomat admitted in an interview with The New York Times that he had gotten angry with the Manhattan vendor and said things he "probably [regrets]." He claimed the vendor enraged him after expressing sympathies for the Palestinian group Hamas, although none of the videos shows the vendor mentioning the group.

"I got rather upset and I've said things to him, that in retrospect, I probably regret," Seldowitz told the newspaper. "Instead of focusing in on him and what he said, I expanded into insulting his religion and so on."

Seldowitz insisted that he is not Islamophobic, saying that he has many Muslim and Arab colleagues who could vouch for him.

Gotham Government Relations on Tuesday said it had severed all ties with Seldowitz and apparently scrubbed his profile from their website. The firm's CEO, David Schwartz, said he was "personally outraged and offended by" Seldowitz's "vile" language and offered to legally represent the food vendor pro bono.

The incident underscores growing tensions globally and in the U.S. over the 47-day war in Gaza, which has killed at least 14,100 Palestinians, more than a third of them children.

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