U.S. congressman stirs outrage with comment to kill all Palestinian children

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Washington, February 21 (RHC)-- Muslims, Democrats and social media users expressed their anger on Wednesday with remarks made by Republican Representative Andy Ogles of Tennessee, who responded to an activist's question about the deaths of Palestinian children in Gaza by asserting that "we should kill 'em all".

In a statement released Wednesday, the American Muslim Advisory Council (AMAC) "unequivocally" denounced Ogles and wrote that his remarks were tantamount to advocating for "the extermination of the Palestinian people".

Noting an increase in anti-Muslim attacks across Tennessee since Israel began its indiscriminate bombing and blockade of Gaza in October, AMAC wrote: "Such rhetoric is not only abhorrent but also antithetical

to our values as a state. It is such rhetoric that has continued to foster a political climate where extremist ideologies flourish, empowering neo-Nazis to openly parade through our streets and allowing genocidal sentiments to go unchallenged. This cannot be tolerated any longer. As citizens of Tennessee, we deserve better representation from those elected to office."

On the social media platform known as X, the opprobrium directed at Ogles was even worse, with one user writing Wednesday: "Name em and shame em! Say hi to Andrew 'I think we should kill em all' Ogles. This extraordinary piece of feces is a USA congressman."

"Andrew Ogles, a sitting member of Congress, says the quiet part out loud. 'I think we should kill 'em all.' He states WE [America] are responsible for killing all Palestinians [genocide]. Congress + Biden + Entire Cabinet are ALL WAR CRIMINALS! Palestine will be free!"

Noting that Palestinians are also Semitic people, Susan Jones posted on X: "'I think we should kill 'em all.' @AndrewOgles #SenatorofTennessee Has NO Shame in his admission of #USIsraeliINTENT to commit #USIsraeliGenocide of #IndigenousSEMITICPalestinians and the IRONY is completely lost on the ignorant that #KillingPalestiniansISANTISEMITISM!!!"

Ogles's comments were in response to a pro-Palestinian activist who peppered him with questions as the two walked through a corridor in the United States Capitol.

"I've seen the footage of shredded children's bodies," the activist told Ogles. "That's my taxpayer dollars that are going to bomb those kids."

Ogles responded bluntly: "You know what? So, I think we should kill 'em all if that makes you feel better. Hamas and the Palestinians have been attacking Israel for 20 years. It's time to pay the piper."

Finally, Ogles turned towards a camera and uttered a final comment before walking away: "Death to Hamas!"

In an e-mail to the congressman's hometown newspaper, The Tennessean, Ogles's spokesperson Emma Settle wrote: "The Congressman was not referring to Palestinians, he was clearly referring to the Hamas terrorist group."

The exchange between Ogles and the activist occurred on February 15th, but video footage of Ogles's remarks was posted to social media hours after the administration of President Joe Biden vetoed a ceasefire resolution at the United Nations Security Council on Tuesday, representing the third time since Israel's assault began that the US has voted against a suspension of hostilities in Gaza.

A first-term congressman, Ogles represents Tennessee's gerrymandered 5th district, which was created in 2022 to favour Republican candidates and includes a swath of the state capital of Nashville. Hours before the U.S. exercised its veto, a spokesman for the United Nations Children's Fund (UNICEF) warned that Gaza is "poised to witness an explosion in preventable child deaths" as malnutrition and disease spread rapidly across the enclave.

Israeli forces have killed more than 12,400 children in Gaza since October 7, according to Palestinian health authorities. More than 600,000 children are currently trapped in the city of Rafah on the Egyptian border, with Israeli forces preparing to invade. Additionally, officials with the charity organisation Save the Children say that nearly 10 Palestinian children in Gaza per day have lost one or both of their legs since October.

"After four months of relentless violence, we are running out of words to describe what children and families in Gaza are going through, as well as the tools to respond in any adequate way," Jason Lee, Save the Children's country director for the occupied Palestinian territory, said in a statement Tuesday.

"The scale of death and destruction is astronomical."

"Children are being failed by the adults who should be protecting them," Lee added. "It's beyond time for the adults in the room to step up their responsibilities and legal obligations to children caught up in a conflict they played no part in, who just want to be able to live."

A Nashville Metro Council member, Zulfat Suara, told The Tennessean that she learned about Ogles's comments while at a council meeting Tuesday night. Coincidentally, on the agenda that evening was a resolution condemning the public display of Nazi symbols, chants and hate speech in downtown Nashville during a rally last weekend.

Born in Nigeria, Suara, a Democrat, is the first Muslim person elected to the metropolitan government of Nashville and Davidson County. She said that rhetoric like Ogles's encourages people "to march and preach hate".

She told The Tennessean: "In the conflict overseas, I have been very mindful of what I say and how I say it because I want to make sure that my Jewish friends are not hurt in what I say and to make sure that my Palestinian families are taken care of. But when legislators at the federal level and the state level continue to demonize people, continue to only look at one side and not the other, that's the result that we see on the streets. And I hope that we will continue to do better.

"This otherization, this demonization, this 'Kill them all' is only breaking us apart."

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