

Muslim leaders turn down Biden's dinner invitation amid Israel's Gaza savagery



Muslim community leaders from several swing states pledge to withdraw support for US President Joe Biden at a conference in Dearborn, Michigan, citing his refusal to call for a ceasefire in Gaza. (#AbandonBiden via AP)

Washington, April 4 (RHC)-- President Joe Biden of the United States had to host a subdued dinner to celebrate the Muslim holy month of Ramadan at the White House after a group of Muslim leaders turned down his invitation over the administration's support for Israel's savagery in the besieged Gaza Strip.

The White House initially invited a group of Muslim community leaders for iftar — the fast-breaking evening meal of Muslims in Ramadan. But the event was cancelled after many leaders refused to have dinner with Biden and his Vice President Kamala Harris on Tuesday evening.

The White House then chose to hold a smaller event with the presence of Harris, National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan, senior White House aides and fewer than a dozen people who work for the administration.

The White House press secretary, Karine Jean-Pierre, said Tuesday the Muslim leaders “expressed the preference” of a policy meeting, and the White House adjusted its plans to accommodate their request.

Muslim leaders still said no, believing that one day was not enough time to prepare for an opportunity to sway Biden’s mind on the Israeli atrocities in Gaza, according to Wa’el Alzayat, who leads Emgage, a Muslim advocacy organization. “It’s completely surreal. And it’s sad,” he said. “It’s inappropriate to do such a celebration while there’s a famine going on in Gaza.”

Salima Suswell, leader of the Black Muslim Leadership Council, told the Washington Post she and other Muslim leaders were invited to dinner at the White House this week but declined the offer. Instead, they asked to speak with the president and other White House officials about Gaza and other issues in their community. Suswell said some activists “speculate that there will be no positive result from speaking with the president.”

Nihad Awad, executive director of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR), said he encouraged other Muslim leaders to decline invitations to the White House if they received one.

The United States has in recent days quietly authorized the transfer of billions of dollars in bombs and fighter jets to Israel. The message, he said, should be “unless he calls for a ceasefire, there will be no meeting with him or his representatives.”

Last year, Biden did not hold an iftar event, but hosted some 350 people for a reception celebrating Eid al-Fitr, a festival marking the end of Ramadan. This year, Ramadan is observed at a time Israel has killed nearly 33,000 people in Gaza since early October. Nonetheless, the Biden administration still approves weapons sales to the regime.

“He can pick up the phone and literally tell Benjamin Netanyahu, no more weapons, just stop it, and Benjamin Netanyahu (prime minister of Israel) will have no choice but to do so,” Awad said.

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