

NAACP calls on White House to end arms transfers to Israel amid genocidal war against Gaza

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Washington, June 7 (RHC)-- The NAACP -- the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People -- one of the largest Black civil rights organizations in the United States, has urged President Joe Biden to “indefinitely” suspend weapon transfers to Israel in a sign of growing discontent with the U.S. president’s support for the Israeli war on Gaza.

In a statement on Thursday, NAACP President and CEO Derrick Johnson said the group has a “responsibility to speak out in the face of injustice and work to hold our elected officials accountable for

the promises they've made.”

“The Middle East conflict will only be resolved when the U.S. government and international community take action, including limiting access to weapons used against civilians,” Johnson said. “The NAACP calls on President Biden to draw the red line and indefinitely end the shipment of weapons and artillery to the state of Israel and other states that supply weapons to Hamas,” the Palestinian group that governs Gaza.

Thursday's statement has come as public opinion polls showed Biden losing support from young voters and people of color over his unwavering support for Israel.

The U.S. president will face off against his Republican predecessor Donald Trump in November in what is expected to be a tight race. Biden has faced months of domestic pressure to condition U.S. aid to Israel amid the Gaza war, which has killed more than 36,600 Palestinians since early October and decimated the coastal enclave.

But despite growing anger over Israel's offensive – including recent deadly assaults on Rafah and on a United Nations school-turned-shelter in central Gaza – the U.S. president has maintained staunch support for the top ally.

Hatem Abudayyeh, chair of the U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN) advocacy group, said Thursday's call by the NAACP for Biden to end arms shipments to Israel was unsurprising given historical ties between the Black and Palestinian liberation movements.

“It's time for Biden to heed these calls from the majority of the people in the US, and turn off the tap of money, weapons, and political support to the criminal apartheid state of Israel,” Abudayyeh told Al Jazeera.

Palestinian American comedian and activist Amer Zahr also called the NAACP's statement a reflection of how “the issue of Palestine has permeated deeply into the Black community.” “The NAACP has long avoided weighing in. Today, it speaks of Palestine not only in humanitarian terms, but also in political terms, calling for liberation. That's historic,” Zahr told Al Jazeera.

He added that the NAACP's position is “huge” -- stressing the group's prominence and long history of civil rights advocacy. The NAACP has usually enjoyed good ties with top Democratic politicians. Biden spoke at the group's annual dinner in Detroit last month, where he called himself a “lifetime member of the NAACP.”

As he continues to face domestic pressure over the war, last week, Biden said Israel had agreed to a ceasefire proposal that would lead to an “enduring” end to the conflict. But contradicting statements from Israeli leaders have sown confusion about the prospect that a deal can be reached.

On Thursday morning, the US along with 16 other nations urged Israeli and Hamas leaders “to make whatever final compromises are necessary” to close the agreement. “It is time for the war to end and this deal is the necessary starting point,” they said in a joint statement.

The ceasefire push has followed warnings that a prolonged Israeli war in Gaza will hurt Biden's re-election prospects. A poll released last week showed that Biden enjoyed less than 20 percent support among Arab Americans, a key constituency in several US swing states that could decide the upcoming vote.

Black voters are also a key bloc in Biden's Democratic Party base, but some surveys have shown support slipping in the run-up to November's elections.

Another new poll, released on Thursday by GenForward at the University of Chicago, showed that only 33 percent of Black voters aged 18 to 40 said they would vote for Biden if the election were held today.

Twenty-three percent said they would vote for Trump.

In its statement, the NAACP warned that a continued Israeli war on Gaza could have repercussions in the United States, as well. “Centuries of conflict reflect that violence results in more violence. The spillover effect in the United States is more racism, Anti-Semitism, and Islamophobia.”

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