

Palestine Conflict under the Joe Biden Administration

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The advent of the Joe Biden administration in US had generated significant hope and optimism for the long-forsaken Palestinians who were exhausted facing the assaults of former President Donald Trump's pro-Israel foreign policy approach. But it all proved rather hollow and short-lived. Recent developments have made it clear that the Joe Biden's administration is a least willing administration to work out a lasting solution to the Israel-Palestine conflict. Expectations were pinned on Joe Biden because he had served in the senate for decades, as vice-president in the Obama administration, and now as the President of the US, so it was believed that he would be more visionary and experienced than any previous presidents of the US to pursue a pragmatic approach to mitigate the suffering of the Palestinians and solve the festering conflict. Unfortunately, all such hopes are being dashed if we take a comprehensive assessment of his foreign policy towards the Palestine conflict.

The Biden administration dispatched Deputy Assistant Secretary for Israel and Palestinian Affairs Hady Amr who [landed](#) in Tel Aviv on May 14 after the Israeli aggression was intensified and global pressure on the US administration to placate Israel grew intense. Prior to it, an indication of President Joe Biden not keeping the Palestine dispute on its priority list was its dilly-dallying in naming a special envoy to the dispute. When Bill Clinton became president, he had already envisioned peace plans for the Palestinian dispute. George W. Bush, like the present Joe Biden, had tried to overlook the Palestine issue in his first year in the office, but in succeeding years he delegated the charge to Secretary of State Collin Powell and appointed a special envoy Gen. Anthony Zinni to engage both Palestinians and Israelis in a meaningful talk. President Barack Obama had also appointed George Mitchell, a veteran and senior diplomat, as a special envoy to the Palestinian conflict. Even the preceding president of US Donald Trump, who was accused of pursuing an anti-Palestine approach to the conflict and world-widely lambasted for adopting pro-Israel policies, had named Jason Greenblatt to initiate talks between Israelis and Palestinians. President Joe Biden's obliviousness to the conflict is not only a testimony to his providing Israel a green signal to unleash a reign of terror on the vulnerable Palestinians but it is also tantamount to a criminal negligence on the part of a democratic president who had time and again promised in his electoral campaign to champion human rights all across the globe.

The region deserves more US attention than ever because a democratic rupture in Israel is pushing it for its fifth election within a span of two years and the Palestinian President Mahmoud Abbas has announced to indefinitely postpone Palestinian parliamentary and presidential elections, which were all set to be observed in May and June respectively. Despite the Joe Biden's long history of remaining an ardent supporter of spreading democratic values, he appears little bothered by deteriorating political situation in the region, mainly because of his other foreign policy priorities, like intensifying US rivalry with China, expediting efforts for withdrawal of US forces from Afghanistan and pursuing Indo-Pacific policies with India and other regional allies. . This lack of attention may turn things from bad to worse for the already deserted and suppressed Palestinians.

President Joe Biden's close intimacy with Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu is another hurdle in the Biden administration's lack of willingness in opting for a just solution of the Palestine conflict. The friendship, despite the Obama administration initiating a nuclear deal with Iran and criticizing the illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank straining the bilateral ties between both close allies, remained intact throughout the years and will continue to have bearing upon the new US policy to the dispute.

The prevailing worrisome trend in the Biden administration can also be corroborated by the fact that the Biden administration has so far appeared unwilling to denounce illegal Israeli settlements in the West Bank and has remained complacent about the usage of the term [‘Israel, Gaza and West Bank’](#) for the disputed tracts of lands instead of reverting to pre-Trump usage of ‘Israel and the Occupied Territories’ for the Palestinian parts under incessant encroachment by Israel.

The Biden administration has taken no practical step to restore diplomatic channels for the Palestinians. It is, however, reassuring that Secretary of State Antony Blinken has announced the Biden administration's decision to reopen US consulate in Jerusalem to mend fences with the Palestinians who were infuriated when the Trump administration closed it by placing it under the control of US ambassador to Israel. The office was the only channel to conduct Palestinian affairs and was a consistent assurance for the Palestinians that US stood by its commitments to acknowledge East Jerusalem as a capital of future Palestinian state. The Trump administration had unilaterally declared Jerusalem as capital of Israel, which had elicited global outcry over the decision. In December 2017, the Palestinian officials had halted engagements with the US officials in the wake of the Trump administration's illegal and unilateral decision to announce Jerusalem as a capital of Israel and moving of the US embassy from Tel Aviv to Jerusalem. The Biden administration decision to reopen the consulate would mean denouncing the Trump administration's decision of declaring Jerusalem as capital of Israel, and the Biden administration has so far expressed no indication of it. It is too early to expect a promising outcome from the announcement because no precise date is given about its reopening.

President Joe Biden instead of addressing the concerns of the Palestinians, on the other hand, had telephoned Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu after becoming the president but overlooked talking to Palestinian leader Mahmoud Abbas. It was only on May 15 when President Biden phoned Mahmoud Abbas amidst Gaza-Israel conflict.

President Donald Trump had taken the step to close down the US Consulate General to exert a pressure on the Palestinians to engage them in talks with the Israelis and punish them for reaching out to the International Criminal Court with demands of penalizing Israel for its war crimes against the Palestinians. President Joe Biden's critical posture towards Saudi Arabia for its war crimes in Yemen but ignoring Israeli crimes simultaneously depicts a hypocritical nature of the US foreign policy towards the Palestinian conflict.

President Joe Biden's announcement to reverse the decisions taken by his predecessor had generated optimism for the Palestinians who had given up to see a slightest of silver-lining from the White House. Yet, he is yet to condemn the statement made by former Secretary of State Mike Pompeo who had legitimized Israeli settlements in the West Bank. The disputed region of Golan Heights of Syria was illegally bestowed upon Israel by the Trump administration. President Joe Biden has also not signalled any possibility of rescinding the decision and has indirectly endorsed the illegal Israeli settlements and expansionist designs. The controversial so-called Great Deal of the Century, a brainchild of Trump's son-in-law Jared Kushner, was criticized for being an increasingly in favour of Israel. The present US administration seems to have extended its blessings to it without taking Palestinian concerns into consideration. The Great Deal of the Century laid the foundation stone for the so-called Abrahamic accords where multiple Arab states restored diplomatic ties with Israel. The accords, it was believed, would open new avenues for a lasting solution for the conflict, but no substantial result is secured from it. The Biden administration has not so far hinted to expand the Abraham accords. It proves that the expectations attached to the Abraham accords have not materialized.

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