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USA

Israeli Attack on World Central Kitchen: Biden Takes Harder Line, U.S. Support for Israel's War Continues, So Do Protests

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When Israel killed seven World Central Kitchen (WCK) workers on April 1, it crossed an invisible red line that immediately led to outrage throughout Europe, Australia, and America. Before that attack, Israel had killed over 200 Palestinian aid workers and 33,000 mostly Muslim Palestinian people, mostly women and children, but now it had killed the wrong people, white people from predominantly Christian countries—Australia, Poland, the United Kingdom, one a U.S. and Canadian citizen: 33-year-old Jacob Flickinger. [1] WCK, renowned for its charity, is headed by chef José Andrés, a U.S. citizen born in Spain.

Netanyahu, who has not apologized for the killing of 200 Palestinian aid workers, or 140 journalists, or 13,800 children, immediately recognized the mistake and said, “Unfortunately, in the last day there was a tragic case of our forces unintentionally hitting innocent people in the Gaza Strip. It happens in war.”

The attack on WCK was a gift to Biden who has been under attack from progressive for not restraining Israel. Now he picked up the phone, called Netanyahu and told him that he must protect aid workers, ensure more aid to Palestinians, and urged an immediate ceasefire in exchange for hostages, suggesting he might condition U.S. military aid to Israel. Biden said, “We’ve gone from a hug, to a handshake, to a slap on the wrist today.”

Israel’s war on the Palestinians is fought with billions of dollars in U.S. military aid including from the Biden administration. Legally, U.S. military aid cannot go to countries that do not protect civilians and insure humanitarian aid. The president had until now been gently verbally pressuring Netanyahu to change Israel’s strategy vis-à-vis the Palestinians. The Israeli attack on WCK gave Biden an opportunity to look tougher. Nevertheless, anger against Israel and the U.S. continues to grow.

Andrés, the head of WCK, immediately accused Israel of deliberately attacking his organization’s aid workers. Following the Israel Defense Force’s investigation and disciplining of officers, WCK stated, “the IDF has deployed deadly force without regard to its own protocols, chain of command and rules of engagement.” And WCK demanded an independent investigation. A convincing Al Jazeera investigation found that the Israeli military, “methodically and deliberately” attacked the WCK workers. At the end of March, Volker Türk, the UN’s top human rights official, stated that there was a “plausible” case that Israel was using starvation as a weapon of war in Gaza. To many of us, this seems not only plausible but obvious. The attack on the WCK led it and other aid organizations to suspend their work, worsening the famine and starvation in Gaza.

The assault on WCK has intensified dissent by some Democratic Party senators and representatives who oppose Biden’s continued, and until now, uncritical support for Israel’s war. And of course, it has encouraged the continuing protest by those activists calling for a ceasefire that have been taking place at party events, sometimes interrupting Biden himself. Jewish Voice for Peace, an anti-Zionist group, stated on X that Israel’s attack on WCK was intentional, writing, “Listen to Palestinians first — and immediately — whenever they endure Israeli genocide and colonization. The Israeli military’s killing of anyone in Gaza is conscious and calculated.”

The Israeli attack on WCK has inflamed the opposition to Biden on the left, which in the primaries voted “uncommitted” rather than vote for the president. Biden’s “slap on the wrist” will not impress them — unless he actually stops military aid to Israel. And that still seems unlikely. Biden’s support for Israel could cost him the election. Maybe.

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[1] BBC, 3 April 2024 "[Who were the World Central Kitchen workers killed in Gaza?](#)".