

When Henry David Thoreau famously chose jail as a consequence for his civil disobedience, he explained it this way:

Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.

Apparently, the post-modern prisoner of conscience see things a bit differently. So that is my suggestion for the folks pushing restorative justice at Princeton: Make these student radicals read Thoreau. Let them and their faculty enablers indict themselves with a comparative cheapness of their violent play-acting.

I suggest the absence of a quorum.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The clerk will call the roll.

The legislative clerk proceeded to call the roll.

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent that the order for the quorum call be rescinded.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

#### VLADIMIR KARA-MURZA

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, last week, we learned the most recent winners of the Pulitzer Prize. I am pleased that among this year's winners is a friend of mine who made it his life's work to help bring democracy and freedom to his home country of Russia: Vladimir Kara-Murza.

This is a photograph of him in Moscow at an earlier time.

Vladimir Putin's government has tried to kill this man repeatedly, to silence him in the uniquely Vladimir Putin way—poison him—but each time, Vladimir survived and continued his work, including writing a regular column for the Washington Post about the need for change in Russia.

While he and his family became residents of the United States, he insisted on maintaining his home in Russia. Two years ago, he came to see me before returning to Russia. I will never forget asking Vladimir about his decision to return. He was unequivocal. He felt he had to return. His aspirations were simple. He believed in a better future for Russia, one in which Russians could live in a free and prosperous society and be at peace with their neighbors.

Unsurprisingly, shortly after he returned to Russia after visiting with me, Vladimir Putin had him arrested and jailed. But Kara-Murza has remained steadfast in his opposition to Putin. He continues his writings from Putin's gulag—deeply thoughtful pieces that offer a different vision of Russia's future. For example, the titles of recent pieces he has written include "Even from a Russian prison, I can see Putin's weakness" and "I am proud to have spoken out against Putin's crimes in Ukraine." It was this powerful writing that won him international recognition and a Pulitzer Prize.

I want to congratulate him and to thank his family for their courage on

receiving this prestigious award. Most importantly, I want to remind him that what he is doing is not ignored, nor forgotten.

To Vladimir Putin, I say: Your folly in Ukraine and domestic repression cannot hide the light of Kara-Murza's moving words.

#### ISRAEL

Mr. DURBIN. Mr. President, on a different subject, I want to speak on President Biden's recent decision to withhold certain offensive U.S. weapons from Israel that might be used in an assault on Rafah.

I support President Biden.

It is not, as some have characterized, a failure to support Israel in a dangerous region after a genuinely horrific Hamas attack—and October 7 was such an attack. It is instead a warning from one of the most pro-Israeli U.S. Presidents to an ally that a full-scale assault on Rafah could not only add to the already catastrophic humanitarian situation in Gaza but undermine any long-term stability in the region.

Let me also remind those critics that President Biden recently helped coordinate, with the use of American forces, a dramatic defense of Israel against an Iranian assault.

Anyone who doubts Joe Biden's commitment to Israel is misguided. But he has reached his limit with Prime Minister Netanyahu and his response in Gaza and focus on his own political survival more than anything else.

His blunders protecting civilians and allowing the flow of aid were noted in the national security memo reported to Congress last week. Let me elaborate. Last week, several of us met with the Jordanian King, Abdullah II—a deeply thoughtful leader who knows the region well. He is a key ally of the United States, and he has made peace with Israel. He, like Middle East expert Tom Friedman, argued that simply leveling Gaza and furthering the humanitarian crisis without a long-term strategy for peace is no strategy at all for Israel. A path forward can only happen with the support of Arab nations in the region.

President Biden has been urging Prime Minister Netanyahu to offer this broader vision, one that likely includes normalization with Saudi Arabia and eventual peace with a Palestinian State—a vision that could be undermined with a massive assault on Rafah.

As Tom Friedman posed to Netanyahu in a recent column, "What do you want more—Rafah or Riyadh? Do you want to mount a full-scale invasion of Rafah to try to finish off Hamas—if that is even possible—without offering any Israeli exit strategy from Gaza or any political horizon for a two-state solution with non-Hamas-led Palestinians?"

Shortly after the horrific attack on October 7, I warned our Israeli friends to learn from our mistakes made in the fog of rage and pain after September 11.

You do not want ill-thought occupation of Gaza to become your Fallujah, and, as also learned in Iraq, one needs the trust of the local civilian population to help counter terrorist groups.

We were speculating recently on how many innocent civilians have been killed in Gaza in an effort to eliminate Hamas. The number is staggering. This is another reason President Biden reached his limit with Netanyahu. The devastating civilian toll in Gaza is not only a moral and humanitarian problem; it is a strategic failure.

More than 40 years ago, an American President was furious about the photos of civilians killed by Israeli shelling in Lebanon. That President then called Israeli Prime Minister Menachem Begin, dressed him down sharply, and told him the excessive assault had to end. Over the course of this President's term, he used the power of U.S. weapons sales, including delaying or withholding certain warplanes and arms, to influence Israeli war policy as well as to criticize Israeli actions in the region at the U.N. Security Council. That President was Ronald Reagan.

Reagan wrote in his diary about the difficult call with Begin:

I was angry. . . . I told him it had to stop or our entire future relationship was endangered.

So I urge those who are resistant and vocal about President Biden's actions to reflect on Ronald Reagan's similar moves to help our Israeli allies from making strategic, tragic mistakes four decades ago or reflect on the words of former Mossad Chief Meir Dagan, who before his death concluded that Israel over the years "achieved a long string of impressive tactical successes but also disastrous strategic failures."

I have long supported a two-state solution for Israelis and Palestinians. In fact, out of the devastating Yom Kippur War came an unimaginable yet lasting peace between Egypt and Israel. It can happen.

So with the right leaders on both sides, it can be done, and we have a responsibility in the United States for a renewed push on all sides towards this goal—one in which Israeli and Palestinian children can once and forever live in safety, peace, and dignity.

I yield the floor.

#### CONCLUSION OF MORNING BUSINESS

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Morning business is closed.

#### EXECUTIVE SESSION

#### EXECUTIVE CALENDAR

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. Under the previous order, the Senate will proceed to executive session to resume consideration of the following nomination, which the clerk will report.

The legislative clerk read the nomination of Courtney Diesel O'Donnell, of

California, to be United States Permanent Representative to the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization, with the rank of Ambassador.

The ACTING PRESIDENT pro tempore. The Senator from Texas.

ISRAEL

Mr. CORNYN. Mr. President, it has been more than 7 months since Israel was attacked by an Iranian proxy, known as Hamas, from Gaza. Hamas terrorists attacked innocent Israelis on October 7 of last year, marking the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. Innocent people were raped, murdered, and taken hostage, and nearly 130 remain hostage in Gaza, including at least 4 American citizens.

In this conflict, the line between good and evil could not be clearer. On one side is America's ally and the lone democracy in the Middle East. On the other is a terrorist organization whose greatest goal is to simply destroy the Jewish State. Hamas terrorists will do whatever it takes to achieve that goal, including using their own citizens as human shields. I can only recall back to some of the horrific videos that we have seen of what they have done to babies and innocent civilians—men, women, and children.

Despite this, President Biden—and notwithstanding some of his rather unequivocal rhetoric—seems confused by whom we should be supporting in this conflict. As the war goes on, the President has slowly backed away from Israel—first with words and now through action. Last week, he threatened to withhold military aid—military aid that had been voted for on a broad, bipartisan basis in the Congress and which he had actually asked for. He effectively issued an ultimatum to our ally as it fights these terrorists: Do what I say or else.

From the beginning of this war, I have said that Israel's operation should not be dictated by anyone but themselves and their national security interests. For some reason, President Biden has focused on Prime Minister Netanyahu as if he were the sole decisionmaker in Israel when, in fact, there is a unity war cabinet that is making those decisions, not Prime Minister Netanyahu alone.

I can only think back to the horrible days after 9/11/2001, a day that 3,000 Americans died as a result of a terrorist attack in New York and Washington, DC. America's allies knew better than to attempt to micromanage our response. Instead, they stood in solidarity with the American people and pledged their support as U.S. troops defended our country. Israel deserves the same support now that we got 23 years ago, but the Biden administration seems confused and of two minds and is sending a terrible message to our closest Middle Eastern ally.

But this is not the first time we have seen the Biden administration's growing rift with Israel. Last week, when Hamas announced it had accepted the

terms of a cease-fire agreement offered by Qatar and Egypt, the announcement set off a media frenzy, but it quickly became clear there was one glaring problem: Israel had yet to see, much less accept, the terms of the proposal. The Israeli Government didn't even receive the text of the proposal until an hour after Hamas released its statement. Prime Minister Netanyahu described the terms as "far from Israel's necessary requirements."

It is no surprise to me that Hamas's leaders went rogue and announced a deal before anything had been agreed to, much less seen, but it is very deeply concerning that Israel was caught completely off guard, especially when reports indicate that the United States had been involved in those negotiations, presumably to the exclusion of Israel. According to reports from Axios, the Biden administration knew about the deal but failed to brief Israel before Monday's surprise announcement from Hamas.

The report says:

Two Israeli officials said the feeling is that "Israel got played" by the U.S. and the mediators who drafted "a new deal" and weren't transparent about it.

Negotiations of this magnitude are understandably extremely delicate, but there is no reason the Biden administration should have kept the Israeli Government in the dark. Israel is a valued ally, but the Biden administration continues to treat it as an untrustworthy antagonist.

Administration officials have developed a habit of manipulating, denigrating, and withholding vital information, and I am extremely worried about the impact of this growing rift and what it will mean between the strong relationship between our two countries. It is Iran which is the principal state sponsor of international terrorism. Particularly in the Middle East, that is the evil head of the snake. Hamas, of course—like Hezbollah in Lebanon, the Houthis in Yemen, and the Shia militias in Iraq and Syria—is the means by which they attack the United States and its allies, including Israel, and they are bent on the destruction of the State of Israel.

Of course, it is not just President Biden's interactions with Israel; it is the way he treats the situation here at home as well. Since Hamas's unprovoked attack on Israel, countless Americans have spoken out about this conflict. We have seen pro-Israel protests, anti-Israel protests, and repeated calls for the violence to end. Of course, we all know the First Amendment protects the right of any American to speak freely and protest peacefully, and countless Americans have exercised that right without incident. But we also know that the Supreme Court has said that neutral factors like time, place, and manner in which those protests occur are important, and school administrators and other officials are completely within their rights to determine the time, manner, and place of

the exercise of those First Amendment rights.

In the past few weeks, we have seen an alarming escalation in protest tactics, and some of the most concerning examples have taken place on college campuses. I have to wonder whether our higher education system has simply lost its way. The purpose of our institutions of higher learning are just that—to learn. Yes, protesting, diversity of opinion, and debate are important parts of learning but not breaking the law or breaking the rules of the institution or jeopardizing the ability of other students to actually pursue their education.

At Columbia University, a group of protesters broke into an academic building and barricaded its doors. At UCLA, anti-Israel protesters physically blocked Jewish students from getting to class. At Yale, a Jewish student journalist was attacked by a pro-Hamas mob while attempting to film a protest.

As I said, the First Amendment protects speech. It protects the right to protest peacefully. It does not give anyone the freedom to riot, to destroy, to threaten, or to carry out acts of violence against others. It certainly doesn't protect the right to attack someone based on their religion.

This situation has become so volatile and so dangerous that two major universities canceled their graduation ceremonies. Can you imagine, after living through the pandemic, where classes were canceled and put online and where students were prohibited the privilege of attending their own graduation exercises to now having, because of these violent, destructive protests, their graduations canceled? Columbia and the University of Southern California called off their main commencement ceremonies due to security concerns. It is important to note that the college class of 2024 was also the high school class of 2020. Many of these students didn't have high school graduation ceremonies because of the pandemic, and now they have been denied an opportunity to graduate in a public ceremony from their colleges or universities.

Despite the escalation of violence and anti-Semitic rhetoric in recent weeks, President Biden has failed to demonstrate much needed leadership. Every statement he has made on this topic has been paired with some sort of equivocation, with some sort of expression of moral equivalency to what Israel is doing and what Hamas is doing.

As an example, a few weeks ago, the President said, "I condemn the anti-Semitic protests," but then quickly noted, "I also condemn those who don't understand what's going on with the Palestinians."

He equated anti-Semitism with ignorance, seemingly suggesting that attacking Jewish people was just as bad as ignoring the news. But there can be no equivocation. Anti-Semitism is