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SL: How Reps. Tlaib & Omar exposed Trump enabling authoritarianism

[TRUMP'S CHAOS-FIRST FOREIGN POLICY HINGES ON LEANING IN TO HIS AUTHORITARIAN FRIENDS](#)

We put out a [statement](#) on Thursday about how shameful and weak it was for the Israeli government to ban U.S. Members of Congress—specifically Reps. Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar—from visiting Israel-Palestine. But we wanted to dig a bit deeper into one point we made in the statement that's not getting as much attention in the coverage of this issue: How the Donald Trump is enabling and encouraging authoritarianism, emboldening authoritarians around the world, and how much damage it's doing to democracy and our [shared values](#) of justice, equality, and security for all.

It's [no secret](#) that under the leadership of Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, Israel has been, [in the words](#) of former Israeli Foreign Minister Shlomo Ben-Ami, “well on its way to joining the growing club of illiberal democracies.”

Indeed, Israel blocking Tlaib-Omar from entering is rooted in the so-called “Progressive Ban” law passed in 2017 that bars entry to Israel any person who “knowingly published a public call to engage in a boycott against the State of Israel or has made a commitment to participate in such a boycott.” The law, as the New Israel Fund (NIF) [notes](#), “was designed to give Israel the capability to harass and punish those who oppose a settler and ultranationalist agenda” of further expanding into Palestinian territory, denying Palestinian rights, and thereby all but eliminating any chance of a just, sustainable, and peaceful solution to the decades-old conflict and military occupation.

When it passed, NIF called the Netanyahu government's ban a “[policy of despots](#),” adding that it “uses blacklists and litmus tests to bar progressive visitors from entering Israel based on their beliefs,” and “flies in the face of the democratic principles enshrined in Israel's declaration of independence.”

Both Reps. Tlaib and Omar support Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS)—a non-violent movement directed toward Israel for its violation of Palestinian rights and brutal occupation of Palestinian lands—so therefore the “Progressive Ban” could effectively apply to them. However,

WIN WITHOUT WAR



late last month, the Israeli Ambassador to the U.S. announced that they would be allowed to conduct their planned fact-finding trips to Israel and Palestine. "Out of respect for the U.S. Congress and the great alliance between Israel and America, we would not deny entry to any member of Congress into Israel," he [said](#).

TRUMP STEPS IN

But since then, Trump has been [privately lobbying](#) against admitting Reps. Tlaib and Omar, and according to [one report](#), "An Israeli official close to the prime minister's office said on Thursday that a call came from the Trump administration as recently as this week pressing Mr. Netanyahu to bar the congresswomen." And then of course, hours after Trump [took his plea to Twitter](#), Israel announced it would bar Reps. Tlaib and Omar (the Israeli government has since said it would allow Rep. Tlaib to visit her grandmother in the West Bank so long as she remained silent, but she [declined](#), saying, "Silencing me & treating me like a criminal is not what she wants for me.")

So when it seemed that the Israeli government would move ever so slightly away from this un-democratic law targeting political critics, Trump helped push it back over the edge. "Donald Trump's wholehearted support for barring these two prominent Members of Congress from Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories," we [said in our statement](#), "and his absurd and 100 percent false, racist, and incendiary attacks on Reps. Tlaib and Omar—once again demonstrates the downward spiral of the authoritarian-like affinity and collaboration between the current U.S. president and Israeli prime minister."

IT'S NOT JUST ISRAEL

As we've seen with Trump's refusal to hold Saudi Crown Prince Muhammad bin Salman accountable for the murder of Washington Post columnist Jamal Khashoggi (or any other Saudi human rights abuses for that matter), Trump enabling Netanyahu's authoritarian tendencies isn't unique. In fact, Trump is in the middle of empowering two other anti-democratic crackdowns *just this week*, both in Hong Kong and Kashmir.

Trump has [offered little support](#) for hundreds of thousands protesting in Hong Kong against draconian laws imposed at the behest of the central government in Beijing. Because his focus is primarily on the trade crisis he created with China and its effects on his own re-election chances, Trump has essentially given the Hong Kong authorities and President Xi Jinping a free pass on how the Hong Kong protests are handled. He's even echoed hardline Chinese government talking points by calling the demonstrations "riots" and that the situation is an internal matter, leading many experts [to warn](#) "that he was tacitly approving what many fear could be the most brutal suppression of democratic dissent in China in nearly 30 years." (It should be noted here that back in 1990, Trump praised Chinese leaders for cracking down on

WIN WITHOUT WAR



pro-democracy protesters in Tiananmen Square. “They were vicious, they were horrible, but they put it down with strength. That shows you the power of strength,” he [said](#).) And of course, beyond these recent events in Hong Kong, there is also Trump’s resounding yet predictable [silence](#) in the wake of China’s [escalating](#) oppression of its Uighur Muslim communities as well.

Meanwhile, last month, Trump [clumsily](#) inserted himself into the decades-long dispute between India and Pakistan over the Kashmir region, which, in part, sparked India’s right-wing, ultra nationalist Prime Minister Narendra Modi to revoke Kashmir’s special status as an semi-autonomous region. Modi then “[clamped down on Kashmir to near-totalitarian levels](#)” and [brutally suppressed](#) subsequent protests—further exacerbating the oppression and years of [systematic human rights violations](#) against the Kashmiri people. Skirmishes have [since](#) crossed the border (or “line of control”) into Pakistan, killing Pakistani and Indian troops, as well as civilians.

“Modi can be confident that Trump, unlike previous American presidents, won’t even pretend to care about democratic backsliding or human rights abuses, particularly against Muslims,” New York Times columnist Michelle Goldberg [noted](#) this week. “Trump’s instinctive sympathy for authoritarian leaders empowers them diplomatically.” Indeed, Trump has not pretended to care about what’s going on in Kashmir. In fact, he [has ignored](#) the crisis altogether.

Trump leaning into dictators spans well beyond this week’s events with Israel, China, and India. As part of his chaos-first foreign policy, he has cultivated friendly relationships with Russia’s Vladimir Putin (who has himself been cracking down on [massive pro-democracy protests](#)—of which Trump [has also been quiet about](#)) and Philippines authoritarian leader [Rodrigo Duterte](#), while our European allies across the pond [scratch their heads in bewilderment](#).

BURIED LEDES

The U.S. Navy has quietly shut down its “Task Force Climate Change,” which had been created ten years ago to plan and develop “future public, strategic, and policy discussions” on the issue. [No one really knows why](#).

The Washington Post [published](#) an interactive this week allowing users to see **how climate change is affecting local American communities**.

Win Without War Policy Director Kate Kizer [told the New Republic](#) this week that Rep. Ilhan Omar “has absolutely moved the conversation forward **on how we build a more values-driven, morally just foreign policy**” while being “fearless in speaking truth to power.”

WIN WITHOUT WAR



Officials at the Department of Homeland Security [have felt](#) in recent years that **“they could not broach topics like domestic terrorism and white supremacist violence with [Donald] Trump** because he was not interested in those concerns.”

Meanwhile, perpetrators in at least [36 cases](#) involving violence, threats, and alleged assaults have **invoked Donald Trump as inspiration**. (An [analysis](#) released earlier this year “found that counties that had hosted a 2016 Trump campaign rally saw a 226 percent increase in reported hate crimes over comparable counties that did not host such a rally.”)

The State Department [suspended](#) a career foreign affairs officer after news broke that **he ran a DC-chapter of a white nationalist organization**.

Also this week, the State Department Inspector General released a report [detailing](#) how Trump appointees **subjected career employees to “disrespectful,” “hostile” and “inappropriate” treatment due to claims of being “disloyal.”**

Right-wing members of the Israeli Knesset **wrote to U.S. House members thanking them for passing a resolution opposing BDS**, adding, [now do the two-state solution](#).

No one has any idea what Trump’s Iran policy is as “diverging opinions within the Trump administration are foiling the nascent diplomatic process.” One former senior Trump official called it [“absolute amateur hour.”](#) (Here’s a [list](#) of Trump’s biggest lies on Iran.)

Trump’s [sanctions are](#) **killing cancer patients in Iran**.

Are we on [the verge](#) of a **peace deal with the Taliban?**

The House Intel Committee is [ramping up](#) its investigation of how Gulf states are using “financial inducements and other means **to win favorable policies from the Trump administration.**”

[And finally](#), **Denmark once declined a drunk guy’s request to take over Greenland** so it’s probably unlikely it will accept Trump’s.