



Photo Source: Washington Post



**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All

# Pressure is Adding Up, Ratings are Going Down: The US Presidential Elections in the Midst of the Gaza Crisis

Amnah Mosly  
February 2024



@Gulf\_Research Gulfresearchcenter gulfresearchcenter gulfresearchcenter

**23**  
Gulf Research Center  
KNOWLEDGE FOR ALL



## Pressure is Adding Up, Ratings are Going Down: The US Presidential Elections in the Midst of the Gaza Crisis

On February 7, 2024, US Secretary of State Antony Blinken wrapped up his fifth visit to the Middle East since the events of October 7th, in an attempt to push forward a proposal by the US, Qatar, and Egypt to end the conflict and secure the release of hostages on both sides. While the US has been against international calls on Israel to end its military operations from the beginning of the war, there now seems to be a gradual shift in the approach taken by the Biden administration, revealing growing frustration with some Israeli actions.

For instance, President Biden imposed sanctions on “extremist settler violence” in the West Bank, [stating](#) that “the situation in the West Bank--in particular high levels of extremist settler violence, forced displacement of people and villages, and property destruction--has reached intolerable levels and constitutes a serious threat to peace, security, and stability.” Days later, President Biden [called](#) Israel’s military response in Gaza “over the top,” and requested a sustained pause after Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu rejected the proposal by Hamas for a ceasefire in exchange for the return of hostages. Despite US pressure, Netanyahu reiterated that the only solution in Gaza is the total collapse of Hamas, even with rising death tolls, [stating](#), “the day after is the day after Hamas. All of Hamas.”

In response, President Biden [said](#) that he is “pushing very hard now to deal with this hostage ceasefire,” and that “there are a lot of innocent people who are starving, a lot of innocent people who are in trouble and dying, and it’s gotta stop.” He also [urged](#) Netanyahu to ensure “urgent and specific steps to increase the throughput and consistency of humanitarian assistance to innocent Palestinian civilians. And he reaffirmed his view that a military operation in Rafah should not proceed without a credible and executable plan for ensuring the safety of and support for the more than one million people sheltering there.”

The change in approach comes as domestic pressure on the President to convince Israel to end its military operations intensifies ahead of the November US general elections where Biden is running for re-election. Domestically, President Biden continues to lose support, particularly among Arab Americans. A report by the [Arab American Institute](#) indicates that only 17% of Arab Americans would vote again for Biden in 2024, in marked contrast to the 59% who voted for him in 2020, and that his approval rating among Arab Americans also plummeted from 74% in 2020 to 29% in the 2023 poll. The report attributes the dramatic decline in support to “his handling of Israel’s continued devastation of Gaza.” Arab Americans have also started a growing [#AbandonBiden](#) campaign, focusing on crucial swing states during the 2020 elections, such as Minnesota, which has a large Arab/Muslim population.

The dissatisfaction is not limited to Arab Americans. President Biden’s approval rating has sunk to its lowest level yet, a mere 38% according to the [Washington Post](#), and according to a new [Data for Progress](#) poll, 61% of likely voters, including a majority of Democrats (76%) and Independents (57%) and a plurality of Republicans (49%), support the US calling for a permanent ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence in Gaza. Even more notable, the Data for Progress [report](#) indicates that nearly half (49%) choose “leveraging diplomatic relationships with Israel and Arab partners in the region to de-escalate violence and ensure the safe release of hostages” as a priority, followed by



“sending humanitarian assistance to Palestinians in Gaza” (31%). Fewer than 1 in 4 voters (24%) choose “sending additional military aid and weapons to Israel” — and only 11% choose “sending US troops to assist Israeli forces in Gaza” as a priority.

Increased discontent can be witnessed across government domains. US city councils have begun to place pressure on President Biden, with about 70 US cities passing resolutions regarding the crisis in Gaza, and with most calling for a ceasefire, according to a [Reuters](#) analysis of city data. According to the [report](#), “most of the ceasefire resolutions have passed in Democratic states like California, though at least 14 have passed in swing states like Michigan that could be decisive in Biden’s re-election bid against former Republican President Donald Trump.”

While the presidential election is still ten months away, and it is premature to identify who will be elected, waiting further to end the crisis in Gaza will only result in a more dire result. However, in any outcome, the GCC states, particularly Saudi Arabia, will continue to prioritize de-escalation and ending the catastrophe happening in Gaza, focusing on a ceasefire, an Israeli withdrawal from Gaza, and humanitarian access to Gaza, as well as maintaining its focus and stance according to its national interests, despite who is in the White House.

The most urgent task now for the US is to stabilize the situation in Gaza, including de-escalating tensions in the Red Sea. This entails engaging more effectively with the region and listening to their concerns, including their consistent calls to end the military operations in Gaza and warnings that unless managed immediately, the crisis will lead to even more devastating consequences. For instance, the Doha Declaration of the 44th Session of the Supreme Council of the Gulf Cooperation Council (Doha Summit), held in December 2023 [warned](#) “of the dangers of expanding confrontations and the spread of the conflict to other regions in the Middle East, unless the Israeli aggression stops, which will lead to dire consequences for the peoples of the region and for international peace and security.”

Moreover, at a joint press conference in December 2023, Saudi Arabia’s Foreign Minister HRH Prince Faisal bin Farhan [stated](#) that “our message is consistent and clear that we believe that it is absolutely necessary to end the fighting immediately...one of the disturbing facts of this conflict is that ending the conflict and the fighting doesn’t seem to be the main priority” for the rest of the world. It is long overdue for the international community to take heed of this message and make this a priority.

**Gulf Research Center**  
Knowledge for All



**مركز الخليج للأبحاث**  
المعرفة للجميع