

July 24, 2024

President Joseph R. Biden
The White House
1600 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20500

U.S. Department of Justice
950 Pennsylvania Ave NW
Washington, D.C. 20503

U.S. Department of State
2201 C St NW
Washington, D.C. 20520

U.S. Department of Homeland Security
300 7th St SW
Washington, D.C. 20024

Dear President Biden,

As members of American civil society working on matters related to U.S. policy in the Middle East and elsewhere, we are alarmed by recent reports that the Israeli government is engaging in illicit social media influence operations targeting U.S. elected officials and U.S. civil society.

According to *The New York Times*, “The covert campaign was commissioned by Israel’s Ministry of Diaspora Affairs,” and is ongoing. The influence campaign “used hundreds of fake accounts that posed as real Americans on X, Facebook and Instagram to post pro-Israel comments. The accounts focused on U.S. lawmakers, particularly ones who are Black and Democrats...with posts urging them to continue funding Israel’s military...”¹

Ha’aretz reports that the efforts also included “a large-scale, well-coordinated effort to attack and smear groups that are typically pro-Palestinian. These groups include citizens of Western countries (mainly the U.S. and Canada) of Islamic origins, using deeply Islamophobic and anti-immigrant content.”²

Likewise, *The Guardian* expanded on this reporting, noting that the covert campaign was just one of many efforts to target American voices critical of Israel and shape the public debate. As it reported, the Israeli government relaunched a program “designed to carry out what Israel called

¹ “Israel Secretly Targets U.S. Lawmakers With Influence Campaign on Gaza War,” *The New York Times* <https://www.nytimes.com/2024/06/05/technology/israel-campaign-gaza-social-media.html>

² Israel Secretly Targeted American Lawmakers With Gaza War Influence Campaign, *Haaretz*, <https://www.haaretz.com/israel-news/security-aviation/2024-06-05/ty-article-magazine/.premium/israel-secretly-targeted-american-lawmakers-with-gaza-war-influence-campaign/0000018f-e7c8-d11f-a5cf-e7cb62af0000#>

‘mass consciousness activities’ targeted largely at the U.S. and Europe,” that is “part of a hardline and sometimes covert operation by the Israeli government to strike back at student protests, human rights organizations and other voices of dissent.”³

It is incumbent on our government to protect its citizens from efforts by foreign governments to inappropriately interfere in our democratic process by spreading disinformation, targeting U.S. elected officials, and seeking to intimidate members of U.S. civil society. Your Administration has taken action to punish and deter such nefarious behavior, such as in March 2024 when the U.S. Treasury Department announced sanctions on Russian firms that set up fake news websites “intended to mislead voters and undermine trust in democratic institutions in the United States and around the world.”⁴

As an Administration that has defined itself as defenders of American democracy against threats from both domestic and foreign state actors, the news of the Israeli government’s attacks on our democracy must be addressed. When asked about these reports, U.S. State Department Spokesperson Matthew Miller declined to comment on the underlying facts, but stated “we have very clear laws on the books in the United States about foreign influence campaigns. We enforce those laws vigorously and we expect everyone to comply with them.”⁵ However, there has been no further indication that the administration is investigating the facts of the report or pursuing accountability for those who engaged in this apparent attempt to improperly impact U.S. policymaking.

Depending on the full scope of these activities, they could raise serious concerns about potential violations of U.S. law, including the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA). If Israeli government agencies or contractors have [indeed](#) engaged U.S.-based persons or entities to conduct these influence operations, they may have been required to register under FARA. In addition, the Federal Election Commission should also investigate whether these activities constitute illegal foreign interference in U.S. elections. Given the scope and sophistication of these operations, a multi-agency investigation involving the Department of Justice, Department of State, and Department of Homeland Security is warranted to fully uncover the extent of these influence campaigns and hold those responsible accountable.

We urge your Administration to thoroughly investigate this matter, including by meeting with civil society organizations who may have been targeted – and that the Administration take necessary steps to address this matter to protect our citizens and democracy from malign foreign influence operations.

We look forward to your response.

³ Exclusive: Israeli documents show expansive government effort to shape US discourse around Gaza war, The Guardian, <https://www.theguardian.com/world/article/2024/jun/24/israel-fund-us-university-protest-gaza-antisemitism>

⁴ Treasury Sanctions Actors Supporting Kremlin-Directed Malign Influence Efforts, March 20, 2024, <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/jy2195>

⁵ U.S. State Department Press Briefing, June 5, 2024, <https://www.state.gov/briefings/department-press-briefing-june-5-2024/>

Sincerely,

American Friends Service Committee
American Muslims for Palestine (AMP)
American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee (ADC)
Arab American Civic Council
Arab Resource & Organizing Center (AROC)
Center for International Policy
Center for Security, Race and Rights
CODEPINK
DAWN
Ensaaf
Friends Committee on National Legislation
ICNA Council for Social Justice
Islamophobia Studies Center
Just Foreign Policy
Migrant Roots Media
Minnesota Peace Project
MountainGem Advocacy & Communications
MPower Change Action Fund
Muslim Community Network
Muslim Public Affairs Council
National Iranian American Council
Palo Alto Friends Meeting
Peace Action New York State
Peace, Justice, Sustainability NOW!
Poligon Education Fund
Quincy Institute for Responsible Statecraft
The Sikh Coalition
U.S. Palestinian Community Network (USPCN)
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights Action (USCPR Action)
UU Peace Ministry Network
Win Without War