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## *Deference to Joe Biden from Bernie Sanders Has Become Nonsensical*



White House Photo by Adam Schultz – Public Domain

I love Bernie Sanders. By most measures, he's the greatest senator in the last 50 years. I was very glad to be a Sanders delegate to the 2016 and 2020 Democratic National Conventions. But when Bernie screws up, his progressive base should say so.

That happened during the first months of Israel's war on Gaza that began last October. Initially, Bernie sounded equivocal as Israeli forces engaged in mass murder. After several

weeks of carnage, antiwar activists [occupied](#) his D.C. office to demand support for a ceasefire. Some were [arrested](#) for their civil disobedience.

Bernie gradually changed his position and became a fierce critic of Israel, denouncing it for horrific large-scale crimes against Palestinian civilians and challenging the shipment of weapons to the Israeli military. There's no telling if the public pressure from progressives hastened his shift to strongly oppose Israel's genocidal war. But that pressure was necessary.

Unfortunately, after President Biden's debate debacle on June 27, Bernie did not weigh in against the gaslighting maneuvers by the White House and the Biden campaign. In fact, Bernie aided them by downplaying the importance of what had happened on the debate stage.

Since then, Bernie has encouraged the illusion that Biden now has the capacity to be an effective candidate against Donald Trump. Equally problematic has been the implicit pretense that Biden could be up to the job as president until January 2029.

Such evasion not only dodges the reality that Biden was inept and sometimes incoherent during the debate. Since then, much stunning information has come to light, illuminating how badly Biden's mental capacities have diminished.

"In the weeks and months before President Biden's politically devastating performance on the debate stage in Atlanta, several current and former officials and others who encountered him behind closed doors noticed that he increasingly appeared confused or listless, or would lose the thread of conversations," the *New York Times* [reported](#) on July 2.

But on July 3 and again on July 5, [email](#) from Bernie to supporters told them: "President Biden said today that he is staying in the race, and I take him at his word."

However, taking Biden "at his word" is beside the point. As the party's nominee, Biden would [drag down](#) many Democratic candidates with him while making it easy for Donald Trump to win the presidency again.

The problem isn't only what Bernie has been telling people on his email list. He has also been putting out important messages to the broader public via mass media — in the process sending positive signals to Biden and his top aides while they gauge whether to continue the Biden 2024 campaign.

And Bernie is talking directly with the president. Biden "has spoken to me in recent days," Bernie said on Sunday during an [interview](#) on the CBS program *Face the Nation*. It's very

likely that what Bernie told Biden was consistent with what he told the Associated Press, which [reported](#) on July 2 that Sanders “does not want Biden to step aside.”

The AP quoted Bernie as saying: “A presidential election is not a Grammy Award contest for the best singer or entertainer. It’s about who has the best policies that impact our lives.”

But Biden’s inability to clearly advocate for popular policies — or to effectively refute lies and demagogic statements from Donald Trump — is not like a failure to be “the best singer or entertainer.” The president’s glaring inabilities amount to huge failures as a candidate and as a leader.

It’s well known that Bernie Sanders has personal warmth toward Joe Biden. But, given the enormity of what is at stake, personal ties should not get in the way of realizing what ought to be crystal clear: Every day that goes by with Joe Biden as the presumptive Democratic nominee will work to the further advantage of Trump and his extremist right-wing forces.

“I’m going to do everything I can to see that Biden gets reelected,” Bernie told the Associated Press. But at this juncture, that’s the wrong vow. What we really need to hear from Bernie Sanders is a pledge to do everything he can to see that Trump is defeated — and that means replacing Biden with someone who has a better chance of getting the job done.

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