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Is El-Sayed's Win in the US Midterm Elections a Victory for Muslims in America?

News:

In America's midterm elections, Abdul El-Sayed, a Democratic candidate, won the Senate seat in Michigan, becoming the first Muslim Senator in American history. This was viewed by many as a victory and "Milestone for the Muslims of America", especially since there was a campaign of anti-Muslim attacks targeted at El-Sayed, spearheaded by the US President himself. It was described as one of the most Islamophobic campaigns in modern US politics. Many Muslims also viewed El-Sayed's win a victory for them due to his stance as an outspoken critic of 'Israel' and its genocide in Gaza, as well as his calling for an end to US military aid to the Jewish entity, and opposing US military involvement in the Middle East.

Comment:

However, the idea that this was a 'watershed' moment for the Muslims of America and a path to their acceptance in the country rather than being seen as foreigners and the enemy from within is delusionary, as is the belief that gaining a Muslim representative in the Senate, the House of Representatives or even in the White House itself is a means to secure Muslim interests domestically or internationally, or to counter anti-Muslim hate or the widespread discrimination that Muslims face in the country.

In a Pew Research Centre Poll published this spring, 42% of American adults said that Muslims have a negative impact on the United States, while 51% said that Islam encourages violence more than other religions. In a 2017 Pew poll, 61% of US born Muslims reported having experienced some form of discrimination in the past year. Indeed, the peddling of Islamophobia has been a powerful force affecting American politics for years. In fact, it has been described as more widespread than anti-black racism in America. Trump won the presidential elections a second time in 2024 despite his "Muslim ban" that restricted people from a number of Muslim-majority countries entering the country – an executive order that had little push back from the Democratic Party, the national media or voters. The belief therefore that this tidal wave of Islamophobia can be fought through electing Muslims into positions of power – whether it be El-Sayed, Mamdani, Ilhan Omar, Rashida Tlaib or others – is profoundly misled. Did Barack Obama's election-win fight racism against blacks in the country or improve their status or rights, or Rishi Sunak becoming British Prime Minister reduce racism against Asians or immigrants in the UK? Bigotry cannot be fought through the ballot box. It is countered through strong engagement with our neighbours, colleagues, communities and societies and explaining the truth of Islam in all its aspects, and dismantling all the false narratives against Muslims and our Deen in a robust manner through discussions in our homes, schools, colleges, universities, mosques, media and other platforms.

In addition, the idea that electing El-Sayed as a senator or any Muslim into the US Congress can sway US foreign policy agendas, including the country's stance and staunch support of 'Israel' is pure fantasy. America is capitalist state whose foreign policy is based on colonial objectives that seeks to maximise political and material gain for the country, regardless of the immorality and lack of humanity of its actions – such as supporting a terrorist occupation that commits genocide. The US's unwavering and unequivocal support of

‘Israel’ is one that extends beyond any particular ruler, political party or administration. Rather, it is entrenched within the history and continuing politics of the state for it serves the strategic and political interests of the American state for its colonial outpost – ‘Israel’ - to exist and flourish within the region. The Jewish entity acts as a key intelligence and security asset for America in the Middle East as well as being a major buyer of American military hardware and technology. Furthermore, foreign policy direction is primarily set by the executive authority of the president and his administration rather than individual senators.

In addition, those who believe that the Democrats taking control of Congress may mark a noticeable change in US policy towards ‘Israel’ are gravely mistaken. Did they take any significant stance against the genocide in Gaza? Their actions will not extend beyond holding committee hearings on US military sales to the entity, or settler expansions and violence in the West Bank, or perhaps supporting limited restrictions in sales of weapons, or sanctions on violent settlers, or products originating from the settlements – if even that – without any significant change to America’s support, sponsorship, strengthening and protection of the entity. Meanwhile, the brutal occupation, the annexation of Palestinian land, the violations against Al-Aqsa, the arbitrary arrest and torture of people of Palestine and the genocide in Gaza will continue unabated.

Therefore, El-Sayed’s win in these elections is nothing to celebrate; likewise, the election of Mamdani as New York Mayor, or other Muslims elected into congress. It will create no real change for the Muslims of America or beyond. It will not even dent the scale of suffering of the people of Palestine and others who are victims of US foreign policy. The belief that positive change for Muslims, domestically or internationally, can be achieved through engaging within the democratic system is hugely misguided. This is because those elected are operating within a system based upon the materialistic capitalist ideology whose priority will always be to achieve political and economic gain – including supporting a genocide if there is strategic or financial benefit to be had from it. Allah (swt) says: ﴿وَالَّذِينَ كَفَرُوا أَعْمَالُهُمْ كَسَرَابٍ بِقِيعَةٍ يَحْسَبُهُ الظَّمْآنُ مَاء حَتَّى إِذَا جَاءهُ لَمْ يَجِدْهُ شَيْئًا﴾ ***“But those who disbelieved – their deeds are like a mirage in a lowland which a thirsty one thinks is water until, when he comes to it, he finds it is nothing…”*** [TMQ An-Nur: 39]. Moreover, our Prophet (saw) demonstrated to the Muslims the prohibition of engaging within a non-Islamic system when he rejected the offer of the Quraysh to become their ruler under their system – for this would mean giving sovereignty to man-made laws rather than the Laws of Allah (swt).

Success for us as Muslims in any aspect of life can never be achieved through performing any action which displeases our Lord. Furthermore, the liberation of Palestine will never materialize through engaging in the very system which nurtures and protects the occupation. It will only be achieved through supporting the establishment of a state in the Muslim lands which rules by Islam alone and will mobilise its army to liberate and defend the Muslims as commanded by Allah (swt). This state is the Khilafah (Caliphate) based upon the method of the Prophethood- the guardian and shield of the Muslims.

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