

HOW JOE BIDEN LOST THE ARMENIAN AMERICAN VOTE

Posted on April 8, 2024 by Keghart



Category: [Opinions](#)



By [Stephan Pechdimaldji](#), [RealClearPolitics](#), 5 April 2024

The 2024 presidential race is shaping up to be one of the most hotly contested elections in our country's history. With an electorate that has become more polarized than ever, independents and select demographic groups promise to play a more pivotal role in this year's election. It is why Arab Americans in Michigan raised a lot of eyebrows when they turned against Joe Biden in the state's primary signaling their anger with the president's handling of the Israel-Hamas war. But Arab Americans are not the only group feeling betrayed by President Biden these days. Armenian Americans are also deeply frustrated with President Biden and how he allowed Azerbaijan to ethnically cleanse more than 120,000 ethnic Armenians from their ancestral homeland of Nagorno-Karabakh last year.

To fully understand why Armenian Americans feel let down by President Biden, one must examine the rising authoritarianism in Azerbaijan under President Ilham Aliyev and how Joe Biden has turned a blind eye to the petro-dictator's tyrannical rule as a geopolitical trade-off. Since taking power from his father nearly two decades ago, Aliyev has embarked on a campaign to wipe Armenia off the map that started in the fall of 2020 when he launched an illegal and unprovoked war against ethnic Armenians in Nagorno-Karabakh. The war was soon followed by a nearly 10-month blockade of the only road linking Armenians in the region to the outside world that culminated last September when Azerbaijan forced Armenians to leave their homes, upending a civilization that stood for a thousand years overnight.

As a candidate running for president in 2020, Joe Biden vowed to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its actions toward Armenia and rightly criticized the Trump administration for coddling Turkey in its efforts to support and help Azerbaijan. For Armenian Americans, that version of Joe Biden was consistent with his record as a U.S. senator who for years fought for Armenian American issues including the recognition of the Armenian Genocide. Biden was a reliable friend to our community, which explains why Armenian Americans overwhelmingly supported his campaign for president in 2020.

That is why Armenian Americans were so excited when President Biden officially recognized the Armenian Genocide, something no other president had done since President Reagan, by fulfilling his campaign promise to hold Turkey responsible for the first genocide of the 20th century.

It was a watershed moment for Armenian Americans as politicians from both political parties had used the Armenian Genocide for political purposes. Looking for votes and money, President George W. Bush and Barack Obama both promised to recognize the Armenian Genocide as candidates but then bowed to Turkish pressure once in office.

Armenian Americans believed that the Armenian Genocide was no longer a political football for both parties to kick around. Political expediency finally took a backseat to common sense and truth.

So, while we welcomed this historic and long overdue statement, the spirit of its intent was short-lived as Biden made a fateful decision before the ink was even dry.

Days after recognizing the Armenian Genocide, he waived Section 907 of the Freedom Support Act that bans foreign aid to Azerbaijan, which was a harbinger of things to come. With a stroke of his pen, Biden essentially recognized a genocide, only to allow another one to continue.

Since then, Joe Biden has arguably been the most anti-Armenian president to occupy the Oval Office. He has refused to hold Azerbaijan accountable for its war crimes or enforce any sanctions against its leadership. His administration did nothing to help Armenians during the blockade while they starved and blocked countless United Nations initiatives to condemn Azerbaijan or support resolutions that would enable the safe return of Armenians to Nagorno-Karabakh.

And his silence on Armenian political prisoners like the humanitarian Ruben Vardanyan, who currently sits in Azeri jails, has been deafening.

Biden's failure and lack of leadership on issues that are important to Armenian Americans have come to a head. It is one of the reasons why community and coalition leaders from organizations like the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA) have urged Armenian Democrats to vote "uncommitted" in their primary elections as a protest vote against Joe Biden's complicity in Azerbaijan's genocidal campaign.

With more than 200,000 Armenian Americans across Arizona, Georgia, Pennsylvania, Michigan, Nevada, and Wisconsin, this small but powerful group has the potential to tip the outcome of a race that could come down to slim margins in these battleground states.

But it's not too late for President Biden. With little less than nine months until election day, Biden has an opportunity to use his remaining time in office to set the record straight on Azerbaijan. He can start by holding Azerbaijan responsible for its war crimes, levying sanctions where appropriate, and directing the United States Agency for International Development to distribute more help and aid to Armenian refugees. He needs to stop emboldening Azerbaijan while he's still in a position of power and be more vocal about these critical issues on the campaign trail.

President Biden has lost the trust of Armenian Americans. If he wants to earn our vote back, he has a lot of work left to do. Time is running out.

Stephan Pechdimaldji is a communications strategist living in the San Francisco Bay Area. He is a first-generation Armenian American and grandson of survivors of the Armenian genocide.

Comments



H - 2024-04-16 22:04:14

Thank you Mr. keusseyan, Sounds ideal but far fetched. For a start, Armenians boast being the first Christian nation. As such, where we are now is testimony of failure inspite of or because of. Whereas Turkey, Sunni Moslem has developed its own primitive, aggressive, and militant system. Jews on the other hand, build their nation not by praying. In the 1967 war Israel had outstanding military leaders and outside help. "Zenkov ellalou hamar heradess, nviryal arachnorti, kaghakakedi, yev gazmagerboghnerou bedk ga. Choonink."



John keusseyan - 2024-04-09 15:38:06

We have made the same mistakes for thousands of years and expected different results. Like president Reagan said and I quote: "politics is the second oldest profession", and I hope you know what the first one is. *Meyayn zenkov gah hayots pergutiun*. We only talk but take no action! Every Armenian must read Raffi's "Khente" and hopefully change our priorities. Strengthen the Armenian military with high tech weapons systems and attack first and eliminate the enemy's air force on the ground, like the Israelis did during the 1967 war.



H - 2024-04-09 00:23:13

Thank you. President Biden failed and fooled the Armenian nation worldwide. Soon after recognizing the Armenian Genocide he waived Section 907, allowing Azerbaijan (and Turkey/Israel) to attack Artsakh, and drive the Armenians out of the ancient Armenian lands. To date, Mr. Biden has not only not sanctioned Azerbaijan and Turkey for their genocidal roles, he has yet to stop Azerbaijan from attacking and occupying towns and villages in Armenia proper. Armenia does not need US or EU humanitarian aid. What Armenia desperately needs is modern weaponry, technology, and training to defend itself. With that, during the last leg of his presidency he could regain some credibility with the Armenian population. The question remains: Should American Armenians vote for "the better of the two"? Opt for a third candidate? Or finally realize all candidates make election promises seeking funding and Armenian votes, then yield to hostile foreign pressures, once in office.



Roger Hratch Boyadjian - 2024-04-08 22:33:38

WE have a vibrant ARMENIAN community in California. How come they are not mentioned alongside Arizona and other states mentioned in the article



Dr Allen Odian - 2024-04-08 20:47:00

Stephan, We may be disapointed, but voting for Trump is worse