

## Why Biden Lied on Gaza Hospital Attack

### Description

by M. K. Bhadrakumar via [Indian Punchline](#)



*US President Joe Biden hugs Israeli PM Benjamin Netanyahu upon arrival at Tel Aviv airport, October 18, 2023*

White lies are often uttered to protect someone or deflect the upsetting truths. The US President Joseph Biden's white lie obfuscated the horrific truth about the Israeli missile attack on the Baptist church in Gaza on Tuesday night, which took the lives of over 500 people.

Biden probably felt safe because platinum grade war crimes seldom get probed — Vietnam (My Lai massacre), Afghanistan (Kunduz hospital airstrike) and Iraq (Fallujah). Nonetheless, there will be a trial at the high court of his own conscience.

If and when such a moment comes, all he needs to do is to read a stunning blog written by Jonathan Cook, an award-winning British journalist and the author of *Israel and the Clash of Civilisations* who was based in Nazareth (Israel) for twenty years — [This is another Iraqi WMD moment. We are being gaslit.](#)

Cook wrote: "It's not just 'unlikely' that a Palestinian rocket hit the Gaza hospital. It's impossible. The media know this, they just don't dare say it."

Biden knows it, too. Read carefully his remark Wednesday, upon arrival in Israel: "**Based on what I've seen, it appears as though** it was done **by the other team**, not you. **But** there's a lot of people out

there, **not sure**.” [Emphasis added.]

The White House National Security Advisor Jake Sullivan who drafted those words for Biden to deliver took care to lace the statement with caveats. A White House statement by NSC spokesperson Adrienne Watson that followed a few hours also prevaricated: “While we **continue to collect information**, our **current assessment**, based on analysis of overhead imagery, intercepts and open source information, is that Israel is not responsible for the explosion at the hospital in Gaza yesterday.” [Emphasis added.]

The big question, therefore, is: Why did Biden indulge in a risky white lie? Multiple factors come into play here. The news of the Gaza blast was already available Tuesday night in DC, as Biden and his entourage sat on the runway waiting to leave for Tel Aviv, with gnawing anxiety about what the visit would be able to achieve.

Indeed, the visit was a gamble. Yet, cancellation of the trip was a “non-option”, as compulsions of domestic politics and foreign policy had coalesced inseparably by then. One only had to follow the withering criticism of Biden by Fox News and the growing demands by the Republicans to wreak vengeance on Iran for empowering the Palestinian resistance.

Equally, Biden was conscious of the debris of the regional tour undertaken by Secretary of State Antony Blinken just the previous week. Blinken was subjected to snubs and tongue-lashing in a way none of his predecessors ever probably experienced in West Asian capitals. The US’ influence in the region is at rock bottom.

Biden knew he had to act — and to be seen as acting. He also sensed that the optics meant a great deal to Israel (a key ally), to Benjamin Netanyahu (an intimate personal friend of yesteryears whose political career is in jeopardy), and, of course, to Biden himself (as his re-election bid is at stake.)

Biden took out of his toolbox Modi-style “hug diplomacy” at the tarmac of the Tel Aviv airport. As he hugged Netanyahu, Biden killed three birds in a single shot: first, he silenced the Republican Party criticism of him for having appeased Iran and neglected Israel’s security. Second, Biden underscored that although the going gets tough in the proxy war in Ukraine, the US firmly holds Israel’s back.

Most important, he planted rings of engagement around Netanyahu although the latter is at the end of the road in his political career, as he is Washington’s best bet to ensure that future Israeli behaviour remains amenable to US persuasion.

This last point holds the key. The US is not looking for a regional conflict in West Asia. Biden understands Israel’s zest for retribution against Hamas but is averse to widening the conflict. The US takes seriously Tehran’s warning about direct intervention if Israeli attacks continue. But then, Tehran is also not looking for a conflict.

From such a perspective, Biden reaffirmed to Netanyahu Washington’s stalwart support for Israel’s self-defence, but also urged Israel “not to be consumed by rage” in its response to the attack by Hamas. As he put it, “Justice must be done. But I caution that, while you feel that rage, don’t be consumed by it. After 9/11, we were enraged in the United States. While we sought justice and got justice, we also made mistakes.”

Certainly, it needed courage to admit own mistakes to counsel moderation to the present Israeli government, which is dominated by ultranationalist forces. The leader of the Religious Zionist Party, Bezalel Yoel Smotrich is Israel's Finance Minister — a supporter of expanding Israeli settlements in the West Bank who opposes Palestinian statehood and denies the existence of the Palestinian people.

The leader of the Otzma Yehudit, Itamar Ben-Gvir is Netanyahu's Minister of National Security, who was once convicted of supporting the terrorist group Kach, which espoused Kahanism, an extremist religious Zionist ideology, whom Haaretz newspaper described as the 'go-to man' for Jewish extremists and whose client list "reads like a 'Who's Who' of suspects in Jewish terror cases and hate crimes in Israel".

Yet, following hours of talks with Netanyahu and his war cabinet, Biden disclosed that Israel had agreed to allow the opening of the Egypt-Gaza border to deliveries of desperately needed food, water and medical supplies after the 11-day total blockade. "The Palestinian people are suffering greatly as well, and we mourn the loss of innocent Palestinian lives like the entire world," Biden said. "The people of Gaza need food, water, medicine and shelter."

Later, Biden remarked during a refuelling stop at Ramstein Air Base in Germany, "Israel has been badly victimised but the truth is they have an opportunity to relieve suffering of people who have nowhere to go – it's what they should do."

The Guardian newspaper [wrote](#) that "US officials are believed to have tried to convince their Israeli counterparts in meetings during the presidential visit that a scorched-earth response in Gaza would trigger a humanitarian catastrophe, a loss of global support for Israel and perhaps a wider war, without eradicating Hamas."

Elsewhere, in another report, Guardian also noted, "That Biden is emotionally and politically committed to Israel is not open to question. His career confirms it, as do his votes when he was a senator; he has visited Israel many times, from the era of Golda Meir to the present day. His [speech](#) in Washington last week after the Hamas murders was an exceptionally powerful moral statement of the Israel with which he identifies.

"But Biden also supports the Palestinians... The most obvious reason for this visit is for Biden to show solidarity after the slaughter on 7 October. Showing empathy is one of Biden's default strengths. But he has also travelled to urge a strategically informed response by Israel, avoiding overreaction. Escalation is against the US's interests. Washington also wants to keep open the possibility that Hamas's hostages, some of whom are Americans, can be returned alive.

Time will tell how far Biden succeeded in his mission. He had no choice but to resort to a white lie for a larger good. The clincher comes as the hostage crisis prolongs. Biden seems to be hopeful that Washington's efforts through mediation by Qatar will show results. If that happens, it will have a profound impact on American opinion.