

'Board of Peace' billionaire backs AIPAC fund targeting pro-Palestine candidates



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Reporter

PERSPECTIVE

Marc Rowan has a vision for Gaza. "The potential here is tremendous," he said at a February gathering of President Donald Trump's so-called Board of Peace, where Rowan described land devastated by Israeli bombing with a developer's zeal. "This is not a problem of money or collateral. This is a problem with peace."

In the US, Rowan is simultaneously helping ensure a pro-Israel political project has no problem with money. Since the start of this year, according to Federal Election Commission filings, the billionaire CEO of Apollo Global Management has donated \$1.5 million to the United Democracy Project, a super PAC for the American Israel Public Affairs Committee, spending a fraction of his vast wealth to preserve a foreign policy defined by support for Israel's genocide and the flow of US weapons to Israel.

Rowan — who is worth more than \$8 billion and reportedly consulted on his business with convicted sex offender and disgraced financier Jeffrey Epstein — is an executive member of Trump's "Board of Peace," a United Nations-approved body tasked with carrying out Trump's stalled plan for Gaza. He made his first donation to UDP of the year in early March, giving \$1 million, filings show, just as the group began spending aggressively against the now-ousted Rep. Thomas Massie, R-Ky., a loud critic of US support for Israel.

A second donation for \$500,000 arrived on July 23. The same day, the AIPAC super PAC shelled out nearly \$50,000 in campaign mailers in Michigan to attack the progressive pro-Palestine candidate for

US Senate, Abdul El-Sayed. In Missouri, it dropped another \$100,000 for phone banking services against former Democratic Rep. Cori Bush in her race against pro-Israel incumbent Rep. Wesley Bell.

It's not clear which specific UDP efforts have been backed by Rowan's largesse, and neither Rowan nor UDP responded to requests for comment. But Raed Jarrar, advocacy director with Democracy for the Arab World Now, connected Rowan's position on Trump's Gaza board and his major part as a donor to AIPAC's super PAC as a matter of transparency.

"Now, he sits on a board that will decide Gaza's future," Jarrar told The Intercept. "Palestinians did not choose him, and neither did American voters. Americans and Palestinians alike deserve to know whose interests are actually being served."

Rowan, a major donor to Trump's failed 2020 presidential campaign, has long made

his animus toward critics of Israel known. In recent years, he has been a fierce advocate against student protesters calling for an end to the genocide in Gaza, broadly mischaracterizing their anti-genocide calls as "antisemitic," and played a key role in ousting leaders at his alma mater, the University of Pennsylvania, over their handling of the protests. In 2025, he served as a consultant to the White House in its recent attacks on higher education. He donated an initial \$250,000 to UDP in 2022, the year the AIPAC super PAC was founded, and more than quadrupled his giving by 2024. Trump appointed him to the Board of Peace this past January.

"Marc Rowan has used his position to try to silence Palestinians and smear students protesting Israel's genocide," said Margaret DeReus, executive director of Peace, Accountability, and Leadership PAC, which launched this cycle as a pro-Palestine counterweight to the pro-Israel lobby. PAL PAC backed both El-Sayed and Bush, who have committed to cutting military aid to Israel. (El-Sayed prevailed in his Democratic Senate primary against Michigan Rep. Ha-

ley Stevens, while both Bush and Massie lost their races.)

Rowan "gives millions to fund the now-fringe idea that billions of our tax dollars should fund the Israeli military and targets candidates who are calling to stop sending US tax dollars to Israel's genocide," DeReus said. She added that his presence on "Trump's corrupt board" lays bare the actual goal of the governing body: "the continued genocide and ethnic cleansing of the Palestinians living in Gaza".

As support for Israel among the American people has plummeted, and more leftist candidates run on promises to enact an arms embargo on Israel, AIPAC has broken its own spending records and set new ones, helping make El-Sayed and Massie's primaries among the most expensive ever. In Congress, the lobbying giant has also worked to consolidate power among its pro-Israel base. In July, AIPAC lobbied members for the pas-

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sage of a Pentagon program that further entrenches military technological sharing between the US and Israeli militaries. Last week, Democratic leadership appointed three hawkish, pro-Israel, and AIPAC-backed Democrats to the House Foreign Affairs Committee.

In addition to his AIPAC super PAC spending, Rowan has also directly given to a host of pro-Israel candidates this cycle, including New Jersey Democrats Rep. Josh Gottheimer and Sen. Cory Booker, as well as Minnesota Rep. Angie Craig in her failed Senate bid.

The majority of Rowan's spending, however, has been in favor of Republicans, including Mike Rogers, who is facing off against El-Sayed; Florida Sen. Ashley Moody, a vocal opponent of the Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions movement; and Rep. Brian Mast, R-Fla., chair of the House Foreign Affairs Committee and former Israeli Defense Forces volunteer who famously wore his IDF uniform to Congress.

AIPAC has long championed Trump's plan for Gaza, which has included overt calls to displace Palestinians, and supports Israel's hard line in its negotiations with Hamas leaders. Israel, which occupies nearly 70 percent of Gaza, has refused to withdraw its military from the Strip. Israel blames Hamas for refusing to disarm, though the Palestinian armed political group has said it would only surrender its weapons in exchange for a full Israeli withdrawal and the establishment of a Palestinian state — conditions the Israeli cabinet has refused.

AIPAC also regularly celebrates the ongoing bombardment of the Strip, where more than 1,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli strikes since the so-called cease-fire was brokered, including when bombing killed two children recently.

In Rowan's view, there's money to be made from the carnage. At the meeting in Washington, D.C., this past February — when Trump also pledged \$10 billion in public funds to the board — Rowan fired off property value estimates in Gaza, more than 80 percent of which lies in ruins. He cited a coastline valued at \$50 billion; a housing stock, if rebuilt, worth \$30 billion; and infrastructure projects worth another \$30 billion. Rowan spoke next to generic renderings of glistening high-rise apartments, palm tree-laden highways, solar power plants, and coastal oil depots. Consolidating all of these assets under the supervision of Trump's Board of Peace, Rowan said, would allow for "conflict-free management of the resources to benefit the Gazans".

"One hundred fifteen billion of value," he promised. "It just needs to be unlocked and financed."

A map of the Gaza Strip is displayed at the inaugural meeting of the Board of Peace at the US Institute of Peace in Washington, D.C., on February 19, 2026.



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