Pro-Palestinian Protesters Shut Down Sen. Ron Wyden's Town Hall

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VIEW COMMENTS

A group of pro-Palestinian protesters ended a town hall from Sen. Ron Wyden (D-Ore.) early over his support for Israel.

Speaking to a crowd of constituents at Rogue Community College in Grants Pass Monday night, Wyden was criticized for his recent vote against a Senate bill that would have blocked U.S. weapons sales to Israel.

Wyden said he voted no "because I believe that there is a right for Israel to defend itself," Philomath News reported.

The response was reportedly met with boos. Wyden also called the situation in Gaza — in which more than 62,000 Palestinians have been killed by Israel, according to the Gaza Health Ministry — "horrifying."

"[Israeli Prime Minister] Benjamin Netanyahu has been much more interested in his preservation than the preservation of the Israeli nation, and I think that's a big part of the problem," Wyden added.

Around 20 protesters interrupted the event with chants of "Free Palestine!" and "Arms embargo now!" Oregon Live reported.

Videos of the event show protesters interrupting Wyden to call on him to cut financial ties to pro-Israel lobbying groups that have donated to his campaigns, and to support an arms embargo against Israel.

"You don't want peace if you send bombs!" one protester shouted during the town hall.

Wyden was eventually escorted out from the event and said he plans to reschedule. Hank Stern, a spokesperson for Wyden, told Oregon Live that attendees have "every opportunity … to exercise their First Amendment rights and ask him any question."

"Unfortunately, a small group of people did not allow that to happen on Monday," he added.

Earlier this month, dozens of pro-Palestinian protesters in New York City were arrested after staging a demonstration in the office building of Sen. Chuck Schumer (D-N.Y.). Hundreds showed up to stage a sit-in after Schumer and Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand (D-N.Y.) voted against proposals to block an arms deal with Israel.

Jay Saper, an organizer with Jewish Voice for Peace, told HuffPost at the time that blocking the sale would have helped to address the current starvation crisis in Gaza.

"The only way that can address the starvation crisis is if we stop sending the bombs that Israel is continuing to drop on Gaza," Saper said.