

Harris serves wine made in West Bank settlement at Passover Seder

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Vice President Kamala Harris and second gentleman Doug Emhoff have triggered a political backlash after serving wine produced in a West Bank settlement at their Passover Seder Friday, the latest foreign policy gaffe by the woman a heartbeat away from the presidency.

A bottle at the veep's residence appeared to bear a label from the Psagot Winery, which made headlines when it named one of its wines after then-Secretary of State Mike Pompeo, the Times of Israel reported.

The winery tipped its glass to the former top US diplomat, who visited the West Bank after he declared that the Trump administration would no longer deem Israeli settlements there as violating international law.

"Tonight, @VP and I were honored to celebrate Passover with our hardworking staff by holding a Seder at the Vice President's Residence," Emhoff said in a tweet, which appeared to show the Psagot bottle.

"Whether you're celebrating with your family, your work family, or the family you have chosen, we wish you all a Happy Passover!" he added.

During his stop, Pompeo wrote in the Psagot visitors' book that "it is a blessing to be here in Judea and Samaria," using the Hebrew names for the West Bank area.

"May I not be the last Secretary of State to visit this beautiful land," he wrote, adding in a later statement that the US would label exports from Jewish settlements as Israeli goods.

Psagot CEO Yaakov Berg, who hosted Pompeo in November 2020, said Sunday that Harris' staff appeared to have chosen a Cabernet Sauvignon that sells for about \$40, according to the Israeli outlet.

Berg joked to Army Radio that he'd also name a wine for Harris if she comes out against a revival of the 2015 nuclear deal with Iran — from which former President Donald Trump withdrew in 2018.

In October, the State Department said it was "deeply concerned" by the Israeli government's plan to authorize the construction of more than 3,000 homes for Jewish settlers in the West Bank.

News that Psagot wine had been selected for the Seder drew criticism from James Zogby, president of the Arab American Institute, who said, “Psagot’s vineyards are on stolen Palestinian land. It’s not cool,” the Israeli outlet reported.

David Friedman, who was the US ambassador to Israel during the Trump administration — and also has a Psagot wine named after him — tweeted: “Next year I would recommend that the Second Family serve the ‘Friedman’ vintage from the Psagot Winery. I may be biased but I think it’s very good.”

Michael Bueckert, vice president of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, said in a tweet about the bottled brouhaha: “Huge yikes: Kamala Harris @VP served wine from Psagot at her Passover Seder.”

“It is produced in an illegal Israeli settlement which is colonizing the occupied West Bank. This demonstrates serious contempt for Palestinians and int’l law,” Bueckert added.

But Herbie Ziskend, Harris’ senior adviser for communications, insisted in a tweet that “the wine served at the Seder was in no way intended to be an expression of policy.”

This is not the first time Harris has found herself entangled in Middle East politics. In September of last year, the vice president listened raptly to a George Mason University co-ed who accused Israel of committing “ethnic genocide” before responding by telling the student that “your voice, your perspective, your experience, your truth, should not be suppressed. And it must be heard.”

Harris hasn’t fared much better when discussing other parts of the world. During a trip to Europe last month, she was hammered on social media for inappropriate laughter during a discussion of the refugee crisis caused by the Russian invasion of Ukraine. Iuliia Mendel, a former spokesperson for Ukraine President Volodymyr Zelensky, was moved to tweet: “It would be a tragedy if this woman won the presidency,” a sentiment she later deleted.

The previous month, while speaking with reporters at the Munich Security Conference in Germany, Harris claimed that Europe had enjoyed “peace and security” since the end of World War II, apparently forgetting Soviet incursions into Hungary and Czechoslovakia during the Cold War, the Balkan civil wars of the 1990s and Russia’s campaigns in Chechnya, Georgia and Crimea.

In August of 2021, Harris got in trouble again for an outbreak of the giggles during a trip to Singapore. On that occasion, the VP cut off a question from reporters about the botched US withdrawal from Afghanistan by saying, “Hold on, hold on — slow down, everybody” while chuckling to herself.