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'No Kings' protest refusal to address the war on Iran reflects the failure of the U.S. antiwar movement

The upcoming No Kings protest could be the biggest anti-Trump event ever, but opposing the war on Iran doesn't seem to be on the agenda.

Michael Arria - March 26, 2026



No Kings protest New Orleans (Indivisible social media)

This Saturday marks the No Kings Day of Nonviolent Action, where organizers will protest the Trump administration across hundreds of U.S. cities and towns.

Some [predict](#) it will be the biggest anti-Trump event ever, surpassing last year's No Kings rallies.

Minnesota, which became the epicenter of Trump resistance after the killings of Renee Nicole Good and Alex Pretti, will feature the flagship protest with performances and speeches from Bruce Springsteen, Senator Bernie Sanders, and Joan Baez.

The Indivisible coalition, which organized the event, cites a multitude of reasons for the protest, with ICE raids chief among them.

"[The Trump] administration is sending masked agents into our streets, terrorizing our communities," the No Kings website [declares](#). "They are targeting immigrant families, profiling, arresting, and detaining people without warrants. Threatening to overtake elections. Gutting healthcare, environmental protections, and education when families need them most. Rigging maps to silence voters. Ignoring mass shootings at our schools and in our communities. Driving up the cost of living while handing out massive giveaways to billionaire allies, as families struggle. Spending billions of our tax dollars on missile strikes abroad all while driving up the cost of living and handing out massive giveaways to billionaire allies."

You'll note that the current war on Iran — which has killed over 1,500 people, has already caused worldwide economic disruption, and threatens to spill into an even wider conflict — barely gets passing mention in this description. And when it does, the main focus is on the money being wasted.

"Given how much Trump's attack on Iran is rapidly escalating and the stakes involved, it seems now would be a good time for No Kings and Indivisible to marshal their tremendous resources and hold an actual antiwar march with clear demands, not more partisan pep rallies," [tweets](#) media critic Adam Johnson.

"The US is not under any threat of a 'king' nor do I have any sense of what this even means," he added. "It is however in the midst of an imperial murder spree and the largest opposition movement in the county, such as it is, should probably center this fact at some point."

As Johnson points out in the thread, the organizers would be tapping into vast antiwar sentiment. [Polls](#) indicate that a majority of Americans oppose the war, but we have yet to see a robust antiwar movement on the streets.

For years, polling has also consistently shown that Democratic voters have soured on Israel and these numbers have only gotten more extreme amid the U.S.-backed genocide in Gaza. This sentiment has even begun to spread beyond Democrats.

A recent NBC News [poll](#) shows that just 32% of registered voters view Israel in a positive light– down from 47% in 2023. A new [Gallup poll](#) shows that, for the first time in 25 years, a majority of Americans sympathize with Palestinians more than Israelis.

In addition to the polling, multiple Trump officials have essentially admitted that Israel was one of the major reasons that the U.S. went to war, so the issue seems like a no-brainer to rally around, but the “special relationship” is not mentioned by the protest’s primary organizers at all.

Groups like Indivisible undoubtedly have pro-Israel donors, and on some level, Saturday’s protest is not unconnected to the mainstream of the Democratic party, which has not emerged with a coherent, antiwar message in response to Trump’s worldwide rampage. In this sense, the scope of No Kings is severely limited, especially in the current moment.

This isn’t to say that these topics won’t come up on Saturday.

While the primary organizers are mainstream Democratic organizations, they also include groups like the IMEU and JVP, who have protested the genocide in Gaza and have publicly opposed the attacks on Iran. A “No Kings, No ICE, No War” contingent will highlight the war across a number of actions and seek to harness existing antiwar sentiment.

These activists face an uphill battle. The reality is that, regardless of its ultimate size, the No Kings protest lacks a central demand, points of leverage, or a coherent theory of change. And there’s no adjacent antiwar movement to help join the fight, a glaring gap many [have noticed](#).

Where has the U.S. antiwar movement gone?

One answer may be that Trump’s draconian crackdown on anti-genocide activists has had a demoralizing impact on antiwar organizing throughout the country. That crackdown was facilitated by university administrations, and the campus movement that reached historic levels of engagement in 2024 has never been the same.

“For years, the antiwar movement in this country has been worn down – piece by piece, argument by argument, until even its language was made suspect,” [writes](#) journalist Sana Saeed. “But in these last three years, something more deliberate has taken hold: to be anti-war now is to be marked; it’s to risk deportation, violence, abduction, and imprisonment. And we watched it happen: we watched students – who have always been the conscience of any movement – be met not only with the force of the state, but with the violent compliance of the institutions meant to protect them.”

One irony of the current moment is that Trump ran both his presidential campaigns claiming to oppose war and promising Americans that he would stay out of foreign conflicts. While the

polling shows that a majority of Americans now oppose “Forever Wars”, and that this sentiment can help determine elections, the opposition has yet to manifest itself into any kind of political force outside the contours of the voting booth.

“There is today little sustained public conversation about any aspect of the War on Terror, as if it’s a history too difficult — too painful in its origins, uncertain in its outcome, filled with fear and fury, deceit and death — to quite know what to do with,” historian [Jeremy Varon](#) told [Politico](#) in December.

“Instead, the War on Terror has left a mostly unexamined, and I think dangerous, legacy: a vague sense that ‘stupid wars’ are best avoided; enhanced executive powers, used in a new spree of cruelty and killing; and the same fear-driven demonization of a racialized enemy other that got the United States into so much trouble years ago,” he added.

Seeing as how Trump’s second term has essentially been a speed run through the Bush years, it would be a great time to examine them, but it’s unclear whether another No Kings event will bring us any closer to such appraisals.

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