

Shalom TV **OPINION**

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JEWISH NEWS SOURCES DISTORT MR. BIDEN'S POSITION ON "POLLARD PARDON" EXPRESSED ON SHALOM TV

Mr. Biden clearly opposed a Pollard pardon in March 2007

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Last week, a number of Jewish media sources ran a story suggesting Vice President Joe Biden had changed his position on a pardon for Jonathan Pollard when he told a Jewish group in Florida that he opposed freeing the American Jew imprisoned for passing classified information to the State of Israel. For example, Israel National News suggested that the Vice President was simply protecting President Obama in a piece entitled, "Biden Flip-Flopped on Pollard, Took the 'Hit' for Obama." The story's opening sentence read: "US Vice President Joe Biden 'took the hit' for President Obama to oppose freedom for Jonathan Pollard."



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This story also ran in similar fashion in the JTA, Ynet and IMRA; and I have seen it echoed by various bloggers.

I have been especially surprised by these reports of a Biden "flip flop" on a Pollard pardon since the source cited as proof of the Vice President's change of position is an interview I conducted with him for Shalom TV in March 2007 when Mr. Biden was a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination.

I am surprised because the stories seriously distort Mr. Biden's unequivocal opposition to a Pollard pardon by emphasizing one sentence out of context--while ignoring the unambiguous thrust of Mr. Biden's position which he clearly articulated in that March 2007 interview.

In direct answer to my question on a pardon of Jonathan Pollard, Mr. Biden began by saying, "He has to serve his sentence, he has to serve his sentence."

In almost every story quoting his Shalom TV appearance, this part of Mr. Biden's answer is omitted. Rather, in a somewhat irresponsible fashion, clips now appear on the internet which only include one sentence of Mr. Biden's response, in which he said: "Now there is a rationale in my view why Pollard should be given leniency."

News sources have used this single sentence to suggest that during his bid for the Democratic nomination in 2007, Mr. Biden supported a pardon for Pollard.

But if one listens to Mr. Biden's complete answer to the Pollard question, it becomes clear that he was not equating "leniency" with a "pardon;" and that in 2007 he was adamantly opposed to any pardon of Jonathan Pollard.

Here are Mr. Biden's complete words from that March 2007 interview:

"Now there is a rationale in my view why Pollard should be given leniency. There's a rationale for that. But there is not a rationale to say, 'No, what happened did not happen and he should be pardoned.'...If I were president, to go and pardon Pollard would make a lie out of the notion that there are certain rules, period. You cannot give classified information, period. Even to a friend. If this were Great Britain it would be the same thing. So the standard has to be maintained."

One may agree or disagree with Mr. Biden on the issue of a pardon for Jonathan Pollard; but Jews should not be misled into thinking Mr. Biden has changed his mind on the matter. There is something disappointing about a Jewish news source presenting one sentence of an interview out of context and using it to create an erroneous impression.

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