

Joe Biden : a historic visit to Israel disturbed by the Gaza hospital

The American president went to Tel-Aviv to show his supports to the Israelis. But the explosion of a hospital in Gaza, the day before his arrival, has shaken his agenda

Just as he got off his presidential airplane, Joe Biden approached Benjamin Netanyahu and embraced him on the tarmac. The Israeli Prime minister was waiting for this moment, he invited him to come during their last phone conversation, last Saturday. For security reasons and because of concerns about the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, the American president had needed a couple of days to think about his offer. On Wednesday, he's now in Tel-Aviv for a historic visit.

"It is the first time that an American president comes to Israel during a time of war», Dan Arbell, scholar at the American University of Washington's Center for Israeli Studies said. His goal was first of all to support the Hebrew state after the murderous attacks by Hamas. In Tel-Aviv, billboards welcomed the president in English. « The Israelis look up to him like it was rarely the case for others American presidents», the former diplomat said.

During his meeting with Netanyahu, Joe Biden spoke about his admiration for this courageous population, announcing that he will ask Congress for an "unprecedented» aid package so Israel can defend itself. In return, he also came to ask "tough questions» about the situation in Gaza. His other goal was to make sure Palestinian civilians were safe, as they have been caught under fire for nearly two weeks now. Joe Biden was supposed to go to Amman to meet King Abdallah II, Egyptian president Abdel Fattah al-Sisi and Palestinian president Mahmoud Abbas, to coordinate a humanitarian assistance. But the explosion of a hospital in Gaza the day before led to the cancelling of the summit.

The three leaders hold Israel responsible for the catastrophe. "They cannot afford to be seen shaking the hand of the American president right now», Dan Arbell said. Especially since Joe Biden himself said that, according to data shown by his own State department, the explosion appeared to be done by "the other team». In other words, Tsahal would have nothing to do with it. A National Security Council spokesperson later confirmed it on X.

Now, the president has to contact the Arab leaders to convince them and appease the situation, while pro-Palestinian protests broke down in the region. "He is ready to meet with them. If Israel's neighbors are really serious about helping the Palestinians in Gaza, they should work with Joe Biden», Jonathan Lord, director of the Center for a New American Security's Middle East Security Program warned.

The event worried Israelis who feared to see "Air Force One turn back», Dan Arbell said. Although aware of the American support, they know they don't have "carte blanche and that the White House is watching him», the former diplomate continued. Benjamin Netanuhy then agreed after the meeting not to block humanitarian provisions from coming into Gaza, as long as Hamas cannot access it. Joe Biden also promised 100 millions dollars of aids for the Palestinians.