

U.S. Congressman Says Donald Trump Promoting 'Textbook Racism' by Pardoning Arizona Sheriff



Washington, August 28 (RHC)-- A U.S. congressman has accused President Donald Trump of promoting "textbook racism" by a decision to pardon a controversial former Arizona police officer convicted of criminal contempt in a case involving racial profiling.

Representative Elijah Cummings took to Twitter on Saturday, writing that Trump "claims that he wants to unite the country and fight against racism, yet his own words and actions show the opposite."

Cummings was invoking comments made by House Speaker Paul Ryan last year, when he was denouncing Trump -- then-candidate -- for accusing U.S. District Judge Gonzalo Curiel of being "biased because he was Mexican." Ryan said at the time that Trump's criticizing a federal judge because of his ethnicity was the "textbook definition of racist comments."

Over the weekend, Trump pardoned Joe Arpaio who was convicted in July of criminal contempt charges stemming from his refusal to stop detaining suspected undocumented immigrants from Central America.

He was facing the prospect of jail time at his sentencing in October.

Arpaio was a political ally and strong supporter of Trump and appeared on the election campaign trail with the Republican candidate in 2016. Cummings further connected Trump's pardon of the "racist cop" with his controversial remarks earlier this month about the Charlottesville deadly violence, which was sparked after white supremacist and neo-Nazi activists clashed with anti-racism protesters in the city.

Cummings wrote that Trump "has followed up on his abhorrent statements about #Charlottesville by pardoning a racist cop for his crimes against minorities."

Trump came under harsh criticism by both Democrats and Republicans -- and even one of his top advisors -- by blaming "both sides" for the deadly violence, which led to three deaths and more than a dozen injuries. Democratic Senator Ron Wyden criticized Trump for the pardoning in a tweet on Saturday, saying the decision "strikes at the heart of rule of law in America. It violates his oath of office."

"The Arpaio pardon says, if you are a law-enforcement official who supports Trump, break the law & he'll protect you," Wyden wrote.

Republican Senator John McCain also voiced his displeasure Trump's pardon of Arpaio, saying he undermined the president's "claim for respect of rule of law." McCain said in a statement that "no one is above the law" and "sworn law officers should always seek to be beyond reproach in their commitment to fairly enforcing the laws they swore to uphold."

Trump, who has been under fire for a series of crises since taking office seven months ago, now has emboldened his critics from his own party to talk about a bid to take him down in 2020. His response to the Charlottesville violence has prompted Republican officials and independents from New Hampshire to Arizona to consider an organized bid to take down the sitting president, the Associated Press reported.

If that should happen, Trump would be the first president in the modern era to be defeated by a member of his own party. Republican Senate majority leader Mitch McConnell, however, told The New York Times earlier this week that even doubts Trump will be able to salvage his administration to the end of his term.

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