

POLITICS/PALANTIR

Palantir CEO Alex Karp knows staff will keep quitting over his pro-Israel views: ‘I’m not promising to tell you something you want to hear’

By Eleanor Pringle

Palantir’s CEO has doubled down on his support for Israel, saying he’s willing to lose staff if it means standing by his principles.

Alex Karp—who leads the \$55 billion software company that builds platforms for big data analytics—said if he didn’t stand by his morals, his position in effect would be worthless.

The Israel-Gaza conflict is a subject which has divided friends, families and businesses across the world. Since Oct. 7, when the Palestinian militant group stormed southern Israel killing some 1,200 people and taking 240 people hostage, tens of thousands of civilians have died.

According to a daily total by *Al Jazeera*, the war has claimed the lives of more than 31,000 Palestinians, with more than 70,000 injured. In Israel at least 1,139 people have lost their lives with nearly 9,000 more reported as injured.

While governments including the U.S. and the United Kingdom supported the Israeli cause and condemned Hamas in the aftermath of the attacks, both governments have since appealed for a cease-fire in the region.

Corporate problems

The war has also caused problems for companies, which have tried to navigate supporting both Israeli and Jewish colleagues as well as Palestinian staffers. While some businesses have been subject to boycott over perceived support for one side or the other, Karp squarely placed his backing behind Israel.

Palantir, which is known for its work in defense and intelligence, has been supporting both Israel,



DAVID PAUL MORRIS-BLOOMBERG/GETTY IMAGES

Alex Karp, CEO of Palantir Technologies Inc. knows he may lose more staff over his pro-Israel stance.

and Ukraine in its war with Russia. Karp said his business’s support for Israel isn’t because of commercial interests, telling CNBC’s *Money Movers*: “Israel has historically bought our product, it’s not a commercially relevant part of our business.

“The reason why a lot of people don’t speak up publicly is we have a lot of other markets that are much bigger where maybe speaking up is controversial, like the U.S. and other markets. This... definitively was not an economic decision.”

The Stanford Law graduate continued he believes there is a cultural precedent in America to speak up, but only when the issues are “irrelevant, meaningless or somehow it’s something you can say that you don’t believe that won’t get you in trouble and will allow you to sell products you may not believe in while pretending you have beliefs you don’t.”

The tech founder, worth \$2.8 billion according to *Forbes*, clearly didn't want to fall into this category he had outlined, adding: "That's not how we roll at Palantir."

According to Reuters, Palantir—which received early support from the CIA's investment arm, In-Q-Tel—had around 4,000 employees in 2022, with Karp saying some of those may have left on account of his support for Israel.

"We've lost employees, I'm sure we'll lose employees," Karp maintained. "If you have a position that does not cost you to ever lose an employee, it's not a position. It's some kind of self-pleasuring where the joke is on the other person or the joke is on you."

He added: "When you join Palantir and you dedicate your life to Palantir, I am standing in front of the company, the people that run Palantir are standing in front of the company, not promising you to tell you something you want to hear. We're going to get as close to telling you how we see the world as we're legally and ethically allowed to."

'The business world is complicated, you have to make choices'

Karp added that by deploying his technology to certain causes he's demonstrating his beliefs to the

world, explaining that he sees support for Israel as a small part in his belief of Western civilization: "Obviously the business world's complicated, you have to make choices."

"This is not a small issue. From my perspective it's not just about Israel it's like: 'Do you believe in the West? Do you believe the West has created a superior way of living?'"

Palantir's support of Israel has extended to holding its first board meeting of the year in Tel Aviv in January, and taking out a full-page advert in *The New York Times* expressing its views.

Karp—whose company is headquartered in Denver, and who has a home near the White Mountains in Grafton County, New Hampshire—has never shied away from making his views and passions known. The CEO notoriously skis for five hours or more a day, meaning he has the same amount of body fat as 28-medal winning Olympian, Michael Phelps.

The former philosophy student—who can reportedly solve a Rubik's cube in less than three minutes—also has a cabinet in his office stocked with 20 identical pairs of swimming goggles, and practices the meditative art of Qigong every day. In the periods when he's practiced other martial arts like jujitsu and aikido, he was been known to put co-founders in "holds" while they walked through the office.