

FREEDOM IS THE FUTURE

Vision & Policy Demands for Justice from Palestinians in the United States

Palestinians in the United States declare that *freedom is the future*. What follows is a vision of justice grounded in Palestinian demands for freedom and self-determination, our right to return to our homeland, the space to thrive, and our right to resist for the better world we know is possible.

There is a global divide between those who believe in freedom and dignity for all and those who justify oppression and supremacy. The Palestinian struggle for freedom from Israel's daily violence against our people and ongoing settler colonization of our land is part of a universal struggle for collective liberation.

Our work for freedom is rooted in the lessons of our elders to care for the earth, our people, and our heritage. We will not give in to injustice. We will not be erased.

Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people is driven by Zionism, a political ideology that called for the building of a Jewish state in Palestine. To build this state, armed Zionist groups initiated their settler colonial project in our homeland and destroyed hundreds of Palestinian towns and villages, massacred our people, and drove us from our land. Today, Israel maintains an unjust political system of supremacy by denying Palestinians our basic rights and privileging Jews over non-Jews. Israel shares strategies with the U.S.' own settler colonial violence against Indigenous people, as well as the U.S. government's war against the poor and oppressed.

In a clear example, the U.S. and Israeli governments conduct joint police and military exchanges where worst practices are shared. Israeli tactics informed U.S. repression of the Ferguson uprising and Standing Rock water protectors. Our struggles are unique, but we are all fighting for a better world, with justice for all.

It is long past time to divest from oppression and invest in our communities. In the U.S., we should invest in healthcare for all, equal access to education, and a healthier environment to ensure we have a future worth fighting for, instead of using our tax dollars to harm communities around the globe.

The U.S. government uses taxpayer funds—\$3.8 billion annually—to bolster Israel's military, making us complicit in Israel's violence. We Palestinians in the U.S. are forced to fund our own oppression.

We demand that the U.S. immediately end all military funding to Israel and other forms of military, economic, and diplomatic support until Israel upholds the rights of the Palestinian people and our vision of justice. We uplift the demands of our people across the globe for full justice.

WHAT JUSTICE REQUIRES

01

SEE US, HEAR US: Justice Requires **Palestinian Self-Determination**

We demand our right to self-determination. We have the right to dream, to make choices, to shape our lives and futures. We must be free to govern ourselves without interference. We have the right to preserve and express our language, culture, heritage, and peoplehood. We have the right to our land and natural resources. We speak for ourselves and must be consulted and listened to regarding our future. Nothing about us should be without us.

02

RETURN IS THE FUTURE: Justice Requires Our **Right of Return**

We demand the fulfillment of the right of all Palestinians to return to their homeland. Like all people, Palestinians should have the freedom to stay, the freedom to move, and the freedom to return to their homes. We demand the right for all Palestinians to travel freely to Palestine with no interrogations, deportations, racial or religious profiling, or militarized borders. Return is the first step towards realizing historic justice and decolonizing our lands.

03

LET'S GET FREE: Justice Requires **Freedom for All Palestinians**

We demand freedom for all Palestinians. Israel cannot continue to control our land and lives. Israel must end its illegal military occupation of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the Gaza Strip. It must end its blockade against Palestinians in Gaza, who are deprived of water, electricity, and medical treatment. We demand the end of home demolitions, land confiscations, and racialized violence against Palestinian citizens of Israel. We, the Indigenous people of Palestine, are entitled to full freedom on our land.

04

SAFETY FOR ALL: Justice Requires the **Freedom to Thrive**

We demand the freedom to thrive and live in safety and dignity. We demand an end to Israel's structural violence and systematic destruction of Palestinian lives and livelihoods. We cannot thrive with a boot on our necks. We do not want handouts; we want the freedom to build our own just and liberated society that is free of classism, patriarchy, homophobia, racism, ableism, and bigotry in all forms. Without stability, safety, and agency, Palestinians cannot live full lives.

05

STRUGGLE WITH US: Justice Requires Our **Right to Resist for a Better World**

We demand the right to resist our oppression. We demand the right to live without fear of political repression when exercising our right to assembly, dissent, and speech. We demand an end to unconstitutional legislation denying our right to boycott for human rights. We should be free to organize our communities in pursuit of justice and liberation.

We call on people of conscience to support our struggle for freedom and join us in fighting for collective liberation towards justice for all.

These demands are authored by Palestinians in the U.S., and emerged as part of a process supported by Adalah Justice Project and the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights. We draw inspiration from the Vision for Black Lives, The Red Nation's Red Deal, and the disability rights movement.



LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

On Palestine/Israel: Towards A Progressive Vision of Justice for All

The Trump administration “peace plan” rubber stamps the Israeli government’s impending formal annexation of the already de facto-annexed Palestinian West Bank, as well as ongoing separate-and-unequal policies and human rights abuses against the Palestinian people.

This move flies in the face of international law and brings into stark relief the fact that U.S. policy on Palestine/Israel is not aligned with progressive values of securing full human and civil rights for all people. The Palestinian people, like everyone else, simply want to live freely and safely in their homes, to be treated equally, and to give their children and families a brighter future.

The Freedom Is the Future vision and policy demands, presented by Palestinian community and advocacy organizations in the U.S. with the support of progressive partners, present an alternative vision of a just future for all. The following legislative asks align with the demands laid out in Freedom Is the Future in calling for accountability, an end to U.S. funding of Israeli injustices, and support for Palestinian freedom and self-determination, among others.

The following legislative asks are a progressive values-based translation of this vision of justice for all, from the people most impacted, into rights-based Palestine/Israel policies in Congress.

A PROGRESSIVE VISION OF JUSTICE FOR ALL REQUIRES NEW POLICIES CENTERING ACCOUNTABILITY AND RIGHTS.

01 Support H.R. 2407 to advance Palestinian children’s rights and challenge the brutal Israeli military occupation (See FITF Demand #4: Safety for All). The Promoting Human Rights for Palestinian Children Living Under Israeli Military Occupation Act is historic legislation that paves the pathway to justice through accountability and respect for Palestinian rights. Support H.R. 2407, which aims to end U.S. funding for the Israeli military’s systemic physical and psychological abuse of Palestinian children and lay the groundwork for justice for child victims of Israel’s military detention system.

02 Support Dear Colleague letters to advance justice for Palestinians in the Gaza Strip, challenge the Israeli blockade, and end the humanitarian crisis (See FITF Demand #3: Let’s Get Free). Palestinians in the besieged coastal enclave are trapped by Israel’s land and sea blockade, targeted by routine Israeli bombing, and shot by Israeli military snipers when marching for their freedom. Restoring humanitarian assistance is only the first step. To address the root of the humanitarian crisis and ongoing injustice, progressives must demand an end to U.S. complicity in the Israeli blockade.

LEGISLATIVE GUIDE

03 Support legislative vehicles to advance a coherent progressive foreign and domestic policy—which means challenging U.S. support for Israeli separate-and-unequal rule (See FITF Demand #2: Return Is the Future). In order to build respect for and protect human rights, equal rights, and justice at home and abroad, we must challenge U.S. support for Israel's discriminatory, separate-and-unequal political and legal system. This system grants Jewish Israelis full rights and privileges while relegating Palestinian citizens of Israel to second-class citizens in their own homeland and disenfranchising those in the occupied Palestinian territory, including East Jerusalem.

PROGRESSIVE VALUES OF JUSTICE FOR ALL NECESSITATE TRULY PROGRESSIVE ALTERNATIVES TO THE STATUS QUO.

04 Move beyond the misleading framings of S. Res. 234 and H. Res. 326, which perpetuate injustice in Palestine/Israel (See FITF Demand #1: See Us, Hear Us). These resolutions—the House version of which passed over objections of key progressives—undermine a just peace by repeating hollow calls for a defunct two-state solution and the paradoxical and harmful myth that Israel can be both Jewish and democratic. False claims to U.S. neutrality in a “peace process”—most recently exemplified by the Trump administration’s plan to shrink Palestinian lands and deny Palestinian rights—provide cover for the Israeli government’s continued brutal military occupation of Palestinian lands and undemocratic system of ethno-religious supremacy and disenfranchisement of Palestinians. A values and rights-based approach demands accountability for the Israeli government’s ongoing human rights violations by ending unconditional U.S. diplomatic and military support for Israel. Oppose S. 3176, which would codify largely unconditional military funding to Israel.

05 Defend the right to boycott for justice: Support H. Res 496 and oppose H.R. 5595 and H. Res. 782 (See FITF Demand #5: Struggle with Us). 4 in 5 Democrats, 3 in 4 independents, and 6 in 10 Republicans support the constitutional right to boycott for justice in Palestine (Source: January 2020 UMD Critical Issues Poll). Meanwhile, right-wing politicians are leading repressive efforts against boycotts for justice without constituent support. The re-introduced Israel Anti-Boycott Act (H.R. 5595) has only one Democratic cosponsor and a new all-Republican resolution demonizes BDS (H. Res. 782). Progressives must challenge repression and amplify calls for justice by supporting legislation that defends the First Amendment-protected right to boycott (H. Res 496), including boycotts for justice for the Palestinian people, and opposing any legislation that legitimizes attacks on protected free speech (H. R. 5595, H. Res. 782).

The Trump administration “peace plan” and the Israeli government’s move to formally annex the West Bank are obvious attempts to distract from President Trump’s impeachment and to help Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu win reelection after being indicted for corruption. Their pairing is indicative of the rise of right-wing, repressive, and anti-democratic leaders around the globe, from the Philippines’ Duterte to Brazil’s Bolsonaro and India’s Modi.

The current global crisis for freedom and human rights necessitates strengthening and renewing the progressive movement for justice, which progressive members of Congress can do by fulfilling the legislative asks for justice for all as outlined above.