



Building **PEACE** through Personal Experience

STATEMENT OF THE 2012 AFRICAN HERITAGE DELEGATION TO PALESTINE/ISRAEL

www.ifpb.org/africanheritage/statement.html

On the occasion of Black History Month
February 11, 2013

Because of our lived experience of living with and fighting racism, exploitation, and other oppressions in the United States, we are united in our support for civil and human rights of all peoples of the world.

Before going on the 2012 African Heritage Delegation to Palestine/Israel, some of us had a layperson's understanding of the impact of the Israeli occupation on Palestinian people, while others held an intellectual understanding, but we wanted to get a first-hand account from members of Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations, faith-based groups, civil society and grassroots organizations, as well as other members of the African Diaspora who are in Israel.

Based on our observations and discussions with Palestinians, Israelis and members of the African Diaspora, we have come to the following conclusions:

- The Israeli occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip are in direct violation of international laws and several United Nations Resolutions;
- The occupation has led to the physical, psychological and spiritual oppression of Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel, as well as the forced expulsion of millions of Palestinians from their homes, farms, businesses and their homeland;
- In addition to the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government, many Israeli businesses and wide members of Israeli society discriminate against Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and against Mizrahi Jews (Jews of Arab descent) who are citizens of Israel;
- The Israeli occupation and the suppression of Palestinian rights conform to the United Nations definition of Apartheid; and
- The Israeli refusal to provide sanctuary to refugees is inconsistent with international law instituted at the proposal of Israel.

As a result of our findings and conclusions, we adopted the following resolutions:

1. We call on African Americans and all people of good will to support:

- **An end to the occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip**, including:
 - The removal of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem;
 - The dismantling of the apartheid wall; and
 - An immediate end to the demolition of Palestinian homes and the destruction of Palestinian property
- The granting of full equality to all Palestinian citizens and Mizrahi Jewish citizens of Israel; and
- The recognition and realization of the right of return for Palestinian refugees and internally displaced Palestinians.

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2. **We call for an immediate lifting of the economic and military blockade and siege of Gaza** and President Obama to help negotiate a peaceful resolution.
3. **We call for:**
 - The humane treatment of Palestinian children and adults in the custody of the Israeli Defense Forces and Israeli Police;
 - The release of all political prisoners; and
 - An end to indefinite detentions without trial.
4. **We call for all refugees in Israel, particularly Sudanese, Eritrean, and Ethiopian refugees, to receive the rights and guarantees set out in the 1951 UN Convention on Refugees** including the:
 - Right to Work;
 - Right to Education;
 - Right to Housing;
 - Right to Public Relief;
 - Right to not be expelled;
 - Right to not be punished for illegal entry; and
 - For Israel to uphold the Principle of non-refoulement which prohibits the return of a refugee to a territory where their life or freedom is threatened.
5. **We call for the United States government to cease its military aid of \$3 billion of our tax dollars annually to Israel**, which, in the name of security, is used to further oppress, harass, maim and kill Palestinians.
6. **We endorse the international campaign calling for boycotts, divestment and sanctions (BDS)** against Israel in support of Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.
7. **We call on U.S. citizens to join an Interfaith Peace-Builders delegation and travel to Palestine/Israel** to learn about the impact of the Occupation firsthand.

Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. told us, *“Injustice anywhere is a threat to justice everywhere.”* We believe in the indivisibility of our human rights and those of Palestinians and all oppressed peoples. We will not rest until all of humanity is free.

2012 Second African Heritage Delegation Members:

Martha Banks - Fairlawn, Ohio
Daniel Castillo - Los Angeles, California
La Mikia Castillo - Los Angeles, California
Aaron Dixon - Seattle, Washington
Darryl Jordan - Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Jennifer Lee - Santa Clara, California
Rev. Stephanie Lee - Akron, Ohio
Gilo Kwesi Logan - Evanston, Illinois
Rev. Joi Orr - College Park, Maryland
Melanie Smith - Rosedale, New York
Aisha Truss - Chicago, Illinois
Elandria Williams - Knoxville, Tennessee
Jamie Witter - Atlanta, Georgia

About the 2012 African Heritage Delegation and the Mission:

Interfaith Peace Builders' Second African Heritage Delegation participated in a study tour to Palestine/Israel on October, 22 – November 3, 2012. We, the members of the delegation, consisted of six men and nine women from 26 to 63 years of age who came from Jamaica, Nigeria, and 11 states of the U.S. including the West Coast, the East Coast, New England, the Midwest and the South. Many of us have worked in support of civil and human rights in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, faith-based organizations, and professional associations. The group included teachers, professors, community organizers, human rights activists, authors, health professionals, researchers, law students, and ministers and lay leaders from Christian, Islamic and Judaic faith traditions.

Our primary mission was to observe, listen and learn about the impact of the Israeli occupation upon the lives and livelihood of Palestinians in the West Bank, the Gaza Strip and Israel, as well as those who have been dispersed throughout the world. Additionally, our aim was to experience the living reality of other members of the African Diaspora who find themselves in Israel. For 12 of us, the tour was our first trip to Palestine/Israel.

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For more on the African Heritage Delegation see: www.ifpb.org/africanheritage

To read reports from the ground and view photos from the delegation see: www.ifpb.org/del43

Interfaith Peace-Builders believes in the power of eye-witness experience and transformation. Given the opportunity to speak directly with Israelis and Palestinians, delegates return to North America better informed, more energized, and with a deeper understanding of the possibilities for true justice in the Middle East. Learn more at: www.ifpb.org.

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