



Building PEACE through Personal Experience

STATEMENT OF THE 2014 AFRICAN HERITAGE DELEGATION

www.ifpb.org/africanheritage/statement.html

APRIL 2, 2015

We, the members of the Interfaith Peace Builders' 3rd African Heritage Delegation, participated in a study tour of Palestine/ Israel, on October 25 - November 7th, 2014. Our delegation was renamed the *Zaynah Hindi African Heritage Delegation* in recognition of and in solidarity with our delegation's co-leader, a Palestinian American, who was questioned, harassed, detained and denied entry into the country upon our arrival. This was our first glimpse of the oppressive system that Palestinians live through daily.

The delegation consisted of seven men and eight women from across different generations, faiths, places of origin, professions, and activists from various traditions of struggle including the Black Power and Civil Rights movement. As the 3rd delegation of its kind, we recognized that our primary mission was not only to learn first-hand about the conditions Palestinians face in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories, but to build on the experience, findings, and conclusions of the previous delegations, formulate a multifaceted analysis on the occupation, and explore various strategies for resistance and liberation in Palestine.

Our visit took place during a time of heightened struggle which gave the delegation an added layer of intensity. Barely two months had passed since the Israeli assault on Gaza, the deadliest attack on the Gaza Strip in recent memory, left more than 2,100 people dead. The West Bank, since the recent kidnapping and killing of 3 Israeli teens, has seen a wave of arrests, detentions, and shootings by security forces and police, plans for the exponential expansion of illegal settlements, and other forms of violent oppression leveled against Palestinians. Finally, in the US, the police murder of Michael Brown has set off a wave of struggle that has galvanized many in the Black community. That these events happened simultaneously has allowed activists to draw important similarities between the Occupation of Palestine and the racist oppression of People of Color here in the US.

Meeting with early leaders of the Israeli Black Panther party and learning about the early protest movement of second-generation Jewish immigrants from Arab countries (Mizrahi Jews) deepened our understanding of the racial hierarchy within Israeli society and the challenges it faces in confronting it.

We stand united in our commitment to see the liberation of all oppressed peoples around the world. Our short time in Palestine/Israel revealed to us the toll the



occupation has taken on the human dignity and freedom of the Palestinian people, an occupation that is upheld by various oppressive tactics including the military occupation of the West Bank and Gaza Strip, the network of checkpoints, the segregated legal system, land confiscation, and more. However, we saw and were encouraged by the resolve and yearning for liberation we felt from the Palestinian people we encountered during our delegation. It is this central energy that binds the Palestinian struggle together and that connects our struggle to theirs.

FINDINGS AND DEMANDS

2014 AFRICAN HERITAGE DELEGATION

We endorse and support the findings, conclusions, and resolution of the 2011 and 2012 African Heritage Delegations in their entirety and by offering the following statements based on our experiences:

1. Israeli policy of settlement expansion amounts to ethnic cleansing and 21st century colonialism.

Settlement expansion is intrinsically linked to the forced displacement of Palestinian people from their land and the destruction of their homes. These settlements are illegal under international law and will threaten the Palestinian population in its entirety if they are allowed to continue.

2. We must end the monetary support Israel's settler-colonial project receives from the international community, particularly the billions of dollars Israel receives from the US government.

The US is the chief financial supporter and weapons supplier of the state of Israel. Israel's colonial project is made possible by this fact and without this support would not be able to continue.

3. We condemn the campaign Israel's government has waged to court black religious and political support and call on the Black community to give unconditional support and solidarity to Palestinian Liberation

African Americans have a strong tradition of liberation struggle, including the historical support for Black South Africans in their own resistance to apartheid. Palestinians have repeatedly recognized the importance of the Black struggle in the US and have asked for support and solidarity from our community in their resistance against brutal occupation. In a recent and historic delegation, members of the new Black Lives Matter movement also went on a delegation they organized, to Palestine. We all understand that the same forces that oppress us here in the US, oppresses Palestinians on their own land. Therefore, we urge members of our communities to resist campaigns that misappropriate our history and that use it to rebrand the apartheid policies of Israel and call on all Black leaders, organizations, and groups of faith to condemn the actions of the Israeli government, to oppose the occupation, and to unconditionally support Palestinians in their liberation struggle.

4. We call on the Black community to support the plight of African Refugees in Israel.

African refugees, especially those who are detained at the Holot Detention Center, are systematically oppressed in Israel. Our brothers and sisters (mainly from Sudan, Ethiopia, and Eritrea) have been forced to leave their homes and travel hundreds of miles to flee violent conflict

and economic depression. Upon arrival to Israel they have encountered a place almost as hostile as the regimes they have fled from and that continues to violate all of the rights laid out to refugees in the UN charter. Viewing them as a “demographic threat”, Israel deports, harasses, detains, poisons, and even sterilizes its African refugees, all a byproduct of Israel’s ethnic cleansing program aimed against Palestinians. We must stand with our African brothers and sisters in demanding justice for all refugees in Palestine/Israel.

5. The global Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions Movement is an essential tool in the struggle for Palestinian liberation

We affirm our support of the Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions and recognize its success in previous liberation struggles. The BDS movement has gained significant ground recently with some corporations pulling operations from the West Bank, and numerous religious and academic institutions that have voted to divest from Israel. BDS offers a way for communities in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for liberation across the globe to enact that support within their own localities. We must all continue to support these efforts until justice is realized in Palestine/Israel.

Finally, we call on activists and non-activists alike to join initiatives in their communities that support and work in solidarity with Palestinian resistance movements, including but not limited to learning about the impact of the Occupation firsthand by traveling to Palestine with an [Interfaith Peace-Builders](#) delegation.

Moreover, we call on all persons around the world to offer their unconditional support for the liberation struggle of Palestinians and international solidarity movements.

2014 African Heritage Delegation Members:

Dele' Balogun - *Portland, Oregon*

Ajamu Baraka - *Cali, Colombia*

Jen Copeland - *Decatur, Georgia*

Anthony Grimes - *Denver, Colorado*

Zaynah Hindi – *Berkeley, California*

Trina Jackson - *Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts*

Lucas Johnson - *Atlanta, Georgia*

Kamilah Moore - *Altadena, California*

Rebecca Pierce - *Portola Valley, California*

Ann Ragland - *Laurel, Maryland*

James Ricks - *Ithaca, New York*

Zarinah Shakir - *Lawrenceville, New Jersey*

Tyrone Simpson - *Poughkeepsie, New York*

Josette Souza – *Providence, Rhode Island*