



Building **PEACE** through Personal Experience

**STATEMENT OF THE AFRICAN HERITAGE DELEGATION
AUGUST 2, 2011**

www.ifpb.org/africanheritage/statement.html

We, the members of the Interfaith Peace Builders' first African Heritage Delegation, participated in a study tour to Palestine/Israel, July 16-29, 2011.

The delegation consisted of seven men and seven women from 25 to 73 years of age who came from different parts of the U.S. — the West Coast, the East Coast, New England, the Midwest and the South. The group included teachers, professors, college administrators, human rights activists, and ministers and lay leaders from both Christian and Islamic faith traditions. Our primary mission was to listen and to 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.

Many of us have worked in support of civil and human rights in the U.S. Civil Rights Movement, the anti-apartheid movement, the Haiti solidarity movement, and anti-war movements against U.S. wars in Vietnam, Iraq and Afghanistan. For 11 of us, the tour was our first trip to Palestine/Israel.

Because of our experience of fighting racism and exploitation 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 delegation, we had an intellectual understanding of the impact of the Israeli Occupation on Palestinian people 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.

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

- 1) The Israeli Occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of the Gaza Strip are in direct violation of international laws and several United Nations Resolutions;
- 2) 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;
- 3) In addition to the illegal occupation of the West Bank and the blockade of the Gaza Strip, the Israeli government, many Israeli businesses and wide swaths of Israeli society discriminate against Palestinians with Israeli citizenship and against Mizrahi Jews (Jews of Arab descent) who are citizens of Israel;
- 4) The Israeli Occupation and the suppression of Palestinian rights conform to the United Nations definition of Apartheid.

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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, including the removal of all Israeli settlements in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem, and the dismantling of the apartheid wall; the end to the military and economic blockade of the Gaza Strip; 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.
- 2) 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.
- 3) 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.
- 4) We endorse the international campaign calling for boycotts, divestment and sanctions against Israel in support of Palestinian freedom, justice and equality.
- 5) 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.

African Heritage Delegation Members:

Queen Adams - *Chattahoochee Hills, Georgia*

Avery Blakeney - *Washington, DC*

Carolyn L. Boyd - *Alexandria, Virginia*

Gloria Brown - *Streetsboro, Ohio*

Jesse Hagopian - *Seattle, Washington*

Oscar Harrell - *Sudbury, Massachusetts*

Keith Harvey - *Wareham, Massachusetts*

Trina Jackson - *Decatur, Georgia*

Gerald Lenoir - *Berkeley, California*

Michael Nettles - *College Park, Maryland*

Sterling Pack - *Marriottsville, Maryland*

Mark Pollard - *Atlanta, Georgia*

Raheemah Raheem - *Tulsa, Oklahoma*

Paula Watts - *Fort Washington, Maryland*

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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/del38

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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