

WHY IS AN AFRICAN HERITAGE DELEGATION TO ISRAEL/PALESTINE IMPORTANT?

. . . *and why now?*

The time is ripe for our movement to increase our engagement in Israel/Palestine and further expand our advocacy for peace and justice for Palestinians and Israelis. Interfaith Peace-Builders' African Heritage Delegation will raise awareness, heighten activism, and further link struggles between African Heritage communities in the US and those working for justice in Israel/Palestine. Here are 5 reasons why this program is important now:

1. THE SOUTH AFRICA ANALOGY

Many prominent South Africans, among them Archbishop Desmond Tutu, John Dugard and Ronnie Kasrils, have compared Israel's system of segregation in the West Bank and Gaza Strip to the racist system of Apartheid once practiced in South Africa.

In 2005, Palestinian Civil Society launched a movement of nonviolent direct action explicitly modeled on the struggle against Apartheid in South Africa. Like South Africa, Palestinians called for international solidarity to take the form of boycott, divestment and sanctions. The Palestinian Unified Call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions has been signed by over 200 Palestinian organizations, is "*inspired by the struggle of South Africans against apartheid and in the spirit of international solidarity, moral consistency and resistance to injustice and oppression.*"



This Palestinian call has been endorsed by rising numbers of Israelis as well as thousands of people around the world. African Heritage communities bring important experience gained in the movements against segregation in the United States and Apartheid in South Africa which the movement for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine can learn from and adopt.

2. EXISTING EFFORTS IN AFRICAN HERITAGE COMMUNITIES



The African Heritage Delegation will build upon and strengthen existing efforts in African Heritage communities. African Heritage organizations and individuals are among the leaders of the growing movement for a just peace in Israel/Palestine. More focused and comprehensive programs will build upon their work and help create the conditions to further strengthen and diversify efforts to improve US policy in the Middle East and achieve an Israeli-Palestinian peace based on justice.

This program is built upon the efforts of organizations such as Black Voices for Peace and the courageous leadership of many African-American leaders and activists. The delegation will strengthen the work already done and build additional connections between African Heritage communities and community leaders and organizations in Palestine/Israel. In this way, the delegation is a continuation of the efforts of the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation whose Letter to Black America was signed by many prominent members of the African Heritage community.

3. THE OPPOSITION IS ENGAGING AFRICAN HERITAGE COMMUNITIES

In recent years, organizations supporting the status quo of Israeli occupation and continued conflict have stepped up their efforts to engage African Heritage communities in the United States. The nation's foremost pro-Israel organization, the American Israel Public Affairs Committee (AIPAC) has been at the forefront of these efforts.

AIPAC boasts that "*as part of its outreach program, AIPAC is seeking to build relationships with key leaders in the African American community.*" To this end, it has organized its own delegations to Israel, introducing African

Heritage leaders to Israeli politicians and hoping to build strong political solidarity for Israeli political interests. As with most AIPAC trips, the delegates are not encouraged to travel to Palestinian communities, meet Palestinians, or even to build connections with Israeli activists working for a just peace.

Given this reality, Interfaith Peace-Builders African Heritage delegation will fill a needed void. The delegation will help tell other sides of the story by privileging the voices of Palestinians and Israelis working for peace and justice, touring areas impacted by occupation and colonization, and meeting with under-represented communities in Palestine/Israel (including African-Palestinians and Jews of Color).

4. THE STAKES ARE HIGH

Every day that the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands and the Israeli-Palestinian conflict continues more lives are lost and more insecurity is sown across the globe. The land of Israel/Palestine holds importance on numerous levels. It plays a crucial role in the game of geo-politics in the region which has become the focus for United States foreign policy; it is a land that holds deep religious meaning for the world's three largest monotheistic religions; and it is a place where colonialism has continued even through the age of decolonization.

Since 2000, more than 6,400 Palestinians and 800 Israelis have died in this conflict. That includes more than 1,300 Palestinian children and 120 Israeli children. Israel's occupation has sown great hardship throughout Palestinian communities who face soaring levels of malnutrition, poverty and psychological trauma. Israelis also live in great insecurity, which has contributed to the further militarization of the region and serves as a pretense for wars of aggression. Clearly, we must all do more to rectify this situation. The African Heritage delegation aims to start here, at home in the United States, by contributing substantively to the domestic movement for peace and justice in Israel/Palestine.



5. OUR PARTNERS ASKED



Interfaith Peace-Builders partners and allies in African Heritage communities and the Palestinian and Israeli peace and justice movements asked us to organize this delegation. This initiative is a result of long-running and in-depth conversations and strategic considerations. IFPB brings 10 years of experience organizing 35 delegations to Israel/Palestine, bringing approximately 600 people to see the region first-hand and to meet Palestinian and Israeli peace-builders. Our delegates have benefited from IFPB's unique Education and Advocacy Program and have become integral parts of the US-based movement for Israeli-Palestinian peace and justice. Many delegates have taken leadership roles with local, regional and national organizations.

Participants in the African Heritage Delegation will benefit from IFPB's experience and expertise. Our partners have called for it, and now we aim to deliver. The time is ripe and the need is more urgent than ever.

JOIN US: Applications are being accepted now and this delegation will fill up! For more information, and to download an application, go to www.ifpb.org/africanheritage

DONATE: If you cannot join us, please donate what you can. All funds will support the participation of those who would not otherwise be able to attend. Donate today by calling IFPB or visiting www.ifpb.org/donation



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office@ifpb.org • 202.244.0821 • www.ifpb.org