

Position Statement: For Equal Rights and International Law in Israel and Palestine

Brooklyn for Peace is an organization devoted to peace built on justice, equality and human rights.

We believe that permanent peace in the Middle East can only be achieved by a historic compromise between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. This peace must be based on a negotiated solution which includes the end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands held since 1967, the end of the economic exploitation of Palestinian resources (especially land and water,) equal rights, a shared Jerusalem, and justice for the Palestinian refugees in accordance with international principles.

The continuing occupation with expansion of Israeli settlements in the West Bank, the siege of Gaza, and the annexation of East Jerusalem, contravene international law and deny Palestinians their fundamental human rights, including the right of self-determination.

The presence of the separation wall inside the 1967 borders of the West Bank has led to economic and social hardships for ordinary Palestinians. Israel has met non-violent protests against the wall with often lethal violence. This situation perpetuates the conflict, promotes violence, and fuels anti-American sentiment in the region, already at high levels because of US military, diplomatic, and economic support for Israeli policies at the expense of Palestinian rights.

The occupation of the West Bank has led to an apartheid (as defined by the U.N.) social structure in the region. Palestinians have unequal freedom of movement compared to Israelis, an unequal infrastructure, and unequal access to water and other public services. Jewish-only settlements on Palestinian land now house more than half a million Israelis and continue to expand. Israel demolishes Palestinian homes and olive trees in the West Bank and East Jerusalem as a way of driving Palestinians from the region. Attacks on Palestinians by Jewish settlers are common and often deadly. Israeli soldiers

frequently turn a blind eye or actively abet the attackers. Israel flouts international law by keeping hundreds of Palestinian children in military custody for weeks or months without access to parents or lawyers.

We mourn the loss of life of innocent Palestinians and Israelis, and call for an immediate end to all armed attacks directed against civilians. However, because of the enormous disparity in armed might, Palestinian victims of violence outnumber Israeli victims by 100 to 1.

The United States has played a major part in the injustices committed against the Palestinians by providing unqualified diplomatic, political, economic, and military support to Israel. It is not up to the U.S. government, which has initiated enough violent conflicts of its own, to dictate solutions to the people of the Middle East. U.S. aid to the region should be tied to ending violations of international law (such as removing West Bank settlements, recognition of human rights, and ending the violence.) We believe that the billions of dollars in U.S. military aid to Israel should be stopped immediately.

The time is long past for our political leaders to reassess their failed policies towards this conflict, which have produced international isolation for Israel, and a continued erosion of living conditions for the Palestinians. We call on the United States to stop enabling Israeli policies and to withdraw the diplomatic and political support for those policies at the United Nations. In their place must be policies that fully respect the legitimate needs and aspirations of all peoples in an equitable manner.

Brooklyn For Peace is a diverse network of Brooklyn residents alarmed by the growing militarization of our society. We are committed to working towards the elimination of war and the social injustices that are its causes, in Israel / Palestine, as well as elsewhere around the world. As such, we commit ourselves to:

- Inform and educate the Brooklyn community about the fundamental issues in the conflict, take part in respectful debate on the issue, and mobilize local sentiment in opposition to the Israeli occupation and in support of a just peace, with equal rights for Palestinian citizens of Israel and justice for Palestinian refugees.
- Join with others who share our aims in demonstrations, forums, vigils, and other non-violent means of achieving justice and peace in the region. We endorse the use of BDS (boycott, divestment, and sanctions, carefully targeted and clearly explained) to call attention to the urgency of the situation and help change the policies of the U.S. and Israeli governments.

- Lobby our congressional representatives to support a human rights-based and even-handed approach to a negotiated solution, including termination of U.S. military and economic aid that supports the Israeli occupation;
- Participate in interfaith dialogues and other activities organized by groups seeking to promote mutual understanding, reconciliation and peace between Muslims, Christians and Jews.

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