



Russell Tribunal on Palestine

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We are writing to you on behalf of the Russell Tribunal on Palestine (RToP), an international people's tribunal that was created to expose human rights abuses and stir people to action in opposition to Israel's recognized violations of international law. We hope that you will help promote, attend, and participate in our final hearings in New York City on October 6 - 7, 2012.

RToP was launched in 2009 following the massacre of more than 1,400 Gazans perpetrated by Israel, and has since worked to bring together legal experts, scholars, activists, and other people of note, to help shed light on the reality of Israel's occupation of Palestine. RToP also shines a light on the active role that third parties—foreign governments and corporations—play in perpetuating human rights violations in Israel-Palestine.

Previous sessions of the tribunal have been held in Barcelona, London, and Cape Town. These hearings have addressed, respectively, European Union support for Israel, the complicity of corporations in the occupation of Palestine, and the question of whether Israel is guilty of the crime of apartheid. The fourth and final session will be held in New York City this October, and will examine the role of the United Nations and the United States in perpetuating Israel's impunity in depriving the Palestinian people of their rights.

Each and every one of us—particularly those of us and our fellow jury members who grew up in the Jim Crow South, in apartheid South Africa, and on Indian reservations in the United States—is shocked by what Israel is doing to the Palestinians. This letter is an urgent call to others who share our commitment to racial justice, equality, and freedom. This sense of urgency knows no bounds and stretches across vastly militarized borders. In this way the dangers are unprecedented, but so are the opportunities that stem from uniting our struggles.

One of us, Angela Davis, participated in a delegation of indigenous and women of color feminists who traveled to Palestine in June 2011, to bear witness to the effects of the occupation and meet with Palestinians resisting on the ground. The delegation was deeply impressed by the insistence of many Palestinians to link their own struggle to other forms of injustice throughout the world. It is fitting that the fourth session of RToP is being held in the United States, which bears primary responsibility as the enabler of Israeli crimes against Palestinians. In line with the wishes of Palestinian activists and our communities, we link the struggle for Palestinian freedom and self-determination with the battles that shape the lives of poor people, especially people of color, living under the authority of the US state.

Not since Operation Wetback and Operation Gatekeeper have so many families been torn apart; not since Jim Crow have so many rights been denied; not since reservations and internment camps has the United States invested in so many apartheid walls, fences, and cages. The obsession with and militarization of our southern border and every community in between; the Supreme Court's ruling in favor of SB1070's "show me your papers" provision, and the racist anti-immigrant legislation spreading across the nation share troubling parallels with the treatment of Palestinians by Israeli occupation forces. These parallels are what student activists in the United States have deemed "concrete connections" between US-Israeli corporate interests that guide politics while profiting from war, apartheid, and incarceration.

Israeli violations of human rights in Palestine are mirrored in the United States and have not escaped notice. There is growing interest, especially among young people, to connect these struggles. Latino and immigrant justice groups and Students for Justice in Palestine committees, for example, are creating campaigns and arranging outreach and solidarity events among their constituencies.

Heeding the example of the international movement against apartheid South Africa in the 1980s, these groups are organizing to get their institutions and communities to divest, boycott, and sanction apartheid Israel. From California to Texas and Arizona, from Chicago to New York City and Providence, Rhode Island, mobilization efforts in solidarity with Palestinians are on the rise.

Distance does not diminish humanity, nor does shade, gender, tongue, sexuality, or religion. International solidarity is at the root of addressing injustices in Palestine. It is also at the heart of the Russell Tribunal as these sessions have brought together people from across the world and have helped arm them with the knowledge and legal tools to fight human rights abuses.

Building solidarity is an empowering process. We hope that you will join us for the final session of the RToP in New York City on October 6 - 7, 2012.

We hope to see you there.

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