

PIN Bulletin For Local Organizers

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***Will you strive for justice and peace among all people,
and respect the dignity of every human being?***



Lobbying Congress for Palestinian Human Rights

**Tips on effective lobbying from two
experienced PIN lobbyists**

‘Tis the season to lobby Congress
by **Steve France, Diocese of Washington D.C.**

It is easy to feel discouraged about lobbying the U.S. Congress to advocate for Palestinians’ rights. Congressional support for Israel is still willfully blind, and heavier than ever. This depressing situation is, however, exactly the reason why we must keep lobbying as hard as we can: our lobbying is one of the very few ways that the Congress is exposed to the truth about Israel-Palestine and the urgent moral obligation on our government to drastically change its policies. The forces that oppose Palestinian rights would like nothing more than for the Palestinian solidarity movement to give up on lobbying.

2023 is an especially opportune time to go into action for 3 reasons:

1) Congressional offices in Washington and back in the states are almost all open for visits with few or no Covid restrictions. And as always, they are eager to receive visitors, especially constituents. Staff know that visits are a prominent measure of the strength of their bosses’ connections to voters – even visits by folks who are deeply frustrated and whose lobbying “asks” will rarely be granted.

2) Thanks to Covid, the age of virtual (aka Zoom) meetings is upon us.

While not as exciting as in-person visits, Zoom visits are infinitely easier to pull off – especially compared to visits to Washington. Activists anywhere in the country (or the world) can now easily knock on the doors of their representatives and senators. Palestinians and other people with special expertise or personal experience can be patched in – even from the region.

3) Thanks to the appalling rhetoric and brazen actions of the current, ultra-right-wing government of Israel, it has never been easier to convey the totally unacceptable apartheid nature of Israel-Palestine. Shifting public opinion surveys reflect how the truth is getting out through mainstream and alternative media.

As advocates and visitors, we want to provide information and inspiration – and establish an ongoing relationship. EPF-PIN's recent lobbying experience has been that Democratic staff are surprisingly well informed and interested in the hardships and injustices Palestinian endure. If you have any direct contact with the representative or senator (which is rare), she or he is likely not as well informed. It's important to come with up-to-date awareness of where key congressional or administration processes stand in regard Israel-Palestine – and to leave accurate and persuasive literature with those you meet.

Tips for Effective Lobbying **by Melissa Yarbray, Diocese of San Diego**

After lobbying three times in the offices of our elected officials on Capital Hill and three times on zoom calls, this is what I have learned is most helpful, at least for me, when advocating for justice for Palestinians.

Most of my visits and/or calls on Capital Hill were arranged by staff of CMEP who are present on the hill daily and keep track of legislation related to Palestine/Israel. The Episcopal Church is a CMEP member. Visit CMEP's website for info on effective advocacy.

It's Important to review the elected officials' websites to become familiar with what they have and have not supported, and something they have accomplished. Thanking and/or expressing appreciation is good way to build the relationship with both staff member and congressperson. Constituent visits to law-makers offices, both local and on The Hill, can have some influence on undecided members.

In the meetings, be specific, keep to the point, and discuss only one issue. Time is usually limited. Bring your outline or notes to help stay on track.

Introductions of self and others in the group is very important. Share personal experiences about why this issue is important to you, such as visits in the West Bank to witness first hand Palestinian oppression. Include your affiliations, groups you are involved with who share your views. I've learned recently to identify as an Episcopalian with a baptismal covenant that states I will work for justice and peace among all people and respect the dignity of every human being.

Speak up as a U.S. citizen. I emphasize I do not want my tax dollars at 10 1/2 million dollars a day going to a country where human rights are being violated.

Be specific about the bills and resolutions related to Israel/Palestine and stay on track. If in a group, it's important to keep notes and write a thank you letter which repeats the request.

Stay polite, respectful, calm, and ask staff for questions and comments. Listen to their voices and ask their opinion on whether the elected officials might follow through on our “asks.”

Final words - Use the fruits of the spirit when preparing and presenting “love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control.”



A Nakba reflection, 15 May 2023 by Tom Foster

In an 1852 speech given in Rochester, Frederick Douglass asked, “What to the slave is the Fourth of July?”

Over 100 cities and at least 19 states have replaced Columbus Day with Indigenous or Native Peoples Day.

There is another side to our national story.

May 14 marks the 75th anniversary of the formation of the State of Israel. It is Israel’s Independence Day. *Here also, there is another side.*

The non-Jewish indigenous people of Palestine, who had lived for centuries on the land now called Israel, declare May 15 Nakba Day, the Day of Catastrophe. In 1947-48, approximately 500 localities were forcibly cleansed of their inhabitants by armed militias. 750,000 Palestinians became refugees. There are now over 5 million Palestinian refugees registered with the United Nations. The Nakba continues in the form of ongoing forced displacement, home demolitions, military occupation of the West Bank, a siege of Gaza, discriminatory laws, and administrative detention and imprisonment of children.

***So, we ask, what to the Palestinian is Israel’s
Day of Independence?***

IN CASE YOU MISSED THE ANNOUNCEMENT:

The Rev. Ann S. Coburn receives the Cotton Fite Award from EPF PIN

It is with great pleasure and admiration that the Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Israel Network announces that the Rev. Ann Struthers Coburn is the recipient of the Cotton Fite Award for this biennium. The award was established in memory of the Rev. Dr. Cotton Fite, who died in 2017. Cotton was a founding member of PIN and its first convener. We honor Ann for her efforts in the founding of EPF PIN in 2012 and her sustained commitment and untiring work to build up the Network, particularly as director of fundraising and financial oversight, as well as a leader in 'responsible travel' to the Holy Land.

Read the ENS Press Release [HERE](#).



Please note - EPF and EPF PIN are now on a new platform for giving! Whether you are a monthly giver or a first time giver, please visit our new platform to make your gift. Consider increasing your monthly donation to support our efforts for peace and justice.



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