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زبانهای اروپایی

TARIQ RA'OUF

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Charging the US Government with Genocide Before the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights



Photograph by Nathaniel St. Clair

This statement was prepared by Tariq Ra'ouf, a Palestinian American writer, human rights activist, and member of Taxpayers Against Genocide (TAG). He read this statement at the press conference convened in Washington, DC on May 14 by TAG and the National Lawyers Guild International Committee to announce the filing of their historic legal complaint with the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights against the US government for complicity in the genocide in Gaza. Tariq is the son of Monadel Herzallah, one of the lead plaintiffs in this complaint, who has lost 43 family members to the genocide. In the words of Huwaida Arraf, the lead attorney who drafted the complaint and one of the founders of the Freedom Flotilla Coalition: "We are filing this complaint at the Inter-American Commission on Human Rights because the U.S. government has effectively shielded itself from accountability

for its international crimes under its own legal system, even for crimes against humanity and genocide.”

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We stand here today, as Americans who are fed up with the way the United States government has spent our tax dollars. While several programs across housing, education, and healthcare are gutted, our politicians think the better use of that money should be going towards killing children, massacring families, and leveling churches, schools and hospitals. Instead of taking care of our veterans, we are sending more of our soldiers to fight a population of civilians, putting them in the crosshairs of Israel's indiscriminate bombing, and giving them a lifetime of PTSD that our government will refuse to treat.

I lost 43 family members in the last 20 months of this genocide. 43. Growing up in a Catholic private school, I only had 38 classmates. I lost the equivalent of an entire graduating class worth of family members, people that I never got a chance to meet because of Israel's inhumane and illegal blockade on Gaza. These were men, women and children who had promising careers and bright futures. Teachers, doctors, dentists, students. They weren't soldiers, or fighters, or terrorists — but painting them as such, and telling you that they were human shields for such, has manufactured consent for their murders.

One of my cousins, Abdul Rahman, was shot and killed because he was trying to collect rainwater. Another cousin, Mazen, was shot and killed for trying to visit his home, which he had been forcibly displaced from. And perhaps most heartbreaking of all, my 12 year old cousin Sally was sniped in the head, and died while her father apologized to her for not being able to save her. I don't know how to comprehend the fact that it was my tax dollars, and my paycheck, that was used to pay for the bombs and bullets that destroyed my cousins' lives.

We've tried to use the court system here to hold the politicians responsible for these horrors accountable, but like they do to many other citizens of this country, the government has failed us. So, we come to the international community to plead with them to not wait until 2 million more Palestinians are dead until they do something. We plead with the fathers, mothers, sisters, brothers, doctors, and journalists across the world to recognize this moment for what it is: A chance to stand up to cruelty, racism, greed and power-hungry politicians who see Palestine as nothing more than a lucrative plot of real estate for their already bulging pockets. As a Palestinian, I know that the majority of people in this country don't really understand our values, or what we are fighting for. So, let me make it clear: We fight for the same things that the majority of Americans want. Freedom from persecution for our religion; liberty to pursue our dreams of being engineers, doctors, farmers or artists; and justice for the violence

that we unfairly face at the hands of people who refuse to see our humanity. America is no stranger to fighting for humanity. Not even 50 years ago, queer people in this country were fighting for the same things, while the media dehumanized them and didn't care about their deaths. There is nothing more American than fighting for these things, and it shocks me that so many don't see that.

Standing here in DC, I am simultaneously staring in awe and shaking with rage. Growing up, we were indoctrinated to believe in the greatness of these lands, and how the men who laid these foundations stood for freedom, liberty and justice – the same things Palestinians are fighting for. Instead, the hard truth and real history reminds us that those men were slave owners. They were colonizers, and violent oppressors. What is happening in Gaza today is no different to what happened to the Anacostans in the 1600s, who lived here long before DC even existed.

But that's not the history we were taught. And a majority of Americans have a warped sense of what this country represents. But make no mistake, this country's real face is finally showing itself. Today, representing America means defunding schools and doing nothing about the shootings that occur in them. Representing America means prioritizing corporations over people, and protecting CEOs while workers struggle to make ends meet. Representing America means supporting the kidnapping of law-abiding citizens and sending them to torture camps because you disagree with them. Representing America means doing nothing as a fascist and his goons dismantle our democracy, and our pockets are filled with money from war manufacturers and foreign adversaries.

The only reason this is happening is because no one in this country knows what it means to hold our leaders accountable. So, as Americans who refuse to sit idly by as our own money pays for death and destruction, while our cities and towns are stripped of the essentials they need, it is our duty to take this fight to the international community, so that one day, we can all have a country that actually stands for liberty, freedom and justice, instead of the monstrous, settler-colonizing beast that it has always been.

MAY 14, 2025