

Harper Government Obstructs Visit of Respected Palestinian Leader

By [Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East](#)

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Montreal – The Harper government has obstructed the issuance of a visa to Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, resulting in the cancellation of Dr. Barghouti's upcoming speaking tour in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa. Dr. Barghouti applied for a visa on March 5th, for entry into Canada on March 19th, yet despite the urgency of the issue being brought directly to high-level officials in Foreign Affairs and Citizenship and Immigration, the government delayed the issuance of a visa to the point where Barghouti missed two key flights, resulting in a cancellation of Barghouti's visit. In addition to being a member of the Palestinian Legislative Council, and a former presidential candidate, Dr. Barghouti is a recent Nobel Peace Prize nominee. In the past, Dr. Barghouti has received a visa to Canada within 24 hours after applying.

Dr. Barghouti was scheduled to speak at three public events in Toronto, Montreal and Ottawa on the topic: Palestinian political dynamics and the realities for Middle East Peace. Dr. Barghouti also had appointments with several prominent members of parliament scheduled for Monday, March 22nd. The delays with Dr. Barghouti's visa were brought to the attention of Foreign Affairs and Citizenship and Immigration as early as Wednesday March 17th, with Minister Cannon being directly advised of the situation. On Thursday, March 18th, the Deputy Minister of Citizenship and Immigration advised the Bloc Quebecois critic Thierry St-Cyr that officials were aware of the urgency of the matter, but were still doing checks on Barghouti, and his host organization Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME.)

"This seems to be another example of the Harper government's dislike for free speech," declared Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. "Dr. Barghouti has long advocated for a peaceful transition to a two-state solution in Israel-Palestine – his message should appeal to anyone with a sincere commitment to Middle East peace." Dr. Barghouti's record is without blemish: he is a physician and an independent Palestinian politician with a known commitment to non-violence. CJPME believes that the Harper government's obstruction of Dr. Barghouti's visa is part of a broader strategy to muzzle or obstruct any voice critical of the policies of the Israeli government.

In addition to his political credentials, Barghouti is also the co-founder of the Health, Development, Information and Policy Institute (1989), the Union of Palestinian Medical Relief Committees (1979), and the Palestinian National Initiative (2002), a reformist political movement positioning itself as a secular, democratic and non-violent alternative to Fatah and Hamas. Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East often hosts speaking tours,

and has been a consistent advocate for a just peace in the Middle East, basing all its positions on support for international law, equal expectations for all parties, and a belief that violence is not a solution.

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