

U.S. Supreme Court Rejects Attempt to Silence Palestinian Human Rights Advocacy

Jewish National Fund lawsuit tried to allege support for terrorism by US Campaign for Palestinian Rights; SCOTUS ended their baseless case

By [Center for Constitutional Rights](#)

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Today, a U.S.-based Palestinian rights organization prevailed when the Supreme Court refused to take up a lawsuit brought by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and several U.S. citizens who live in Israel. Citing the speech and expressive activities of the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR), including its support for the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, the [lawsuit](#) had argued that the group provided "material support" for terrorism. The dismissal by the district court had been unanimously affirmed by the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals.

This lawsuit is just one example of a long line of efforts to silence Palestinians for advocating for their freedom – in this case, by wielding the accusation of support for terrorism to discredit and dehumanize Palestinians for their advocacy, including their support for boycotts. Multiple organizations with histories of seeking to silence Palestinian rights filed their own briefs in an effort to have the Supreme Court of the United States endorse their suppression effort. USCPR's attorneys say today's decision to let the lower court rulings stand is an important win for the movement and definitively sets the record straight. As the D.C. Circuit Court of Appeals found, "[a]dvocating and coordinating a boycott of Israel – 'economically, academically[,] and diplomatically,'... – is not unlawful."

In [dismissing the suit](#) in March 2021, the lower court said the arguments were, "to say the least, not persuasive." Advocates say the suit is part of a broader effort to criminalize and silence the political activities of supporters of Palestinian rights, a threat that has only increased as Israel's genocide of Palestinians in Gaza intensifies.

“USCPR’s message is justice for all and an end to funding genocide. There’s no lawsuit in the world that can stop us from pushing our demands for human rights,” said Ahmad Abuznaid, Executive Director of the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights. “We will remain focused on opposing Israel’s genocide of the Palestinian people and pursuing justice and freedom for the Palestinian people.”

Headquartered in Jerusalem, the JNF is a quasi-state institution that acquires and administers land for the sole benefit of Jewish Israelis. The JNF’s lawsuit alleges that USCPR bears responsibility for “incendiary terror balloons and kites” sent from Gaza onto JNF land during the 2018 Great Return March.

At issue were USCPR’s fiscal sponsorship of the Boycott National Committee and expressions of support for the rights and demands of Palestinians participating in the Great Return March, when Palestinians protested to demand respect for their right to return to the villages from which Israeli settlers expelled them in 1948. These two activities, the lawsuit claimed, amount to a violation of the U.S.’s Antiterrorism Act, which prohibits “material support” for terrorism.

“The JNF’s prolonged and egregious pursuit of a fishing expedition to silence and intimidate urgent advocacy for Palestinian rights has been definitively put to rest by the Supreme Court,” said [Diala Shamas](#), a Senior Staff Attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights. “The JNF’s accusations were baseless, as recognized by the district court, the court of appeals, and now confirmed by the Supreme Court. Now, as the government of Israel is carrying out an unfolding genocide against Palestinians in Gaza, it is more important than ever that activists be free to speak out without fear. This is an important victory, but USCPR shouldn’t have been subjected to these smears in the first place.”

Also representing USCPR were cooperating counsel Judith Chomsky and Beth Stephens.

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Featured image: This file photo shows the US Supreme Court building located at One First Street, NE, in Washington.

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