

Tlaib and Omar’s Denial of Entry by Israel Is Not a “Freedom of Speech” Issue

By [Rima Najjar](#)

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For how long will discourse on the plight of the Palestinian people be hostage to the notion that “impartial observers”, i.e., the silent majority on Israel, must be addressed in a manner that accounts for “where they are, not where we’d like them to be”? And who defines where these people are in the first place?

According to Robert Cohen, UK Jewish blogger on Israel/Palestine, this is the truism that we ought to embrace — “impartial observers” are not ready to step out of their preconceived notions. Cohen’s critical remarks on Facebook regarding [Israel’s ban](#) of Reps. Ilhan Omar (D-Minn.) and Rashida Tlaib (D-Mich.) from visiting Israel and the occupied West Bank conclude with:

“Meanwhile, most impartial observers will wonder in what sense does Israel think of itself as a liberal democracy and upholder of free speech?”

Do we really believe that what “most impartial observers” will be concerned about upon hearing the news of Israel’s ban of Tlaib and Omar is the state of Israel’s “liberal democracy” rather than, say, Israel’s Jewish Nationalism and its devastating impact on the Palestinian people?

The Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) Movement also issued a [statement](#) that referenced the lack of democratic values in the action of Israel’s government against the two U.S. Representatives, specifically the suppression of free speech:

The Palestinian-led BDS movement condemns the far-right Israeli government’s McCarthyite decision to prevent Congresswomen Tlaib and Omar from visiting the Occupied Palestinian Territory over their support for Palestinian freedom. We call for cutting US military aid to Israel.

To me, Tlaib and Omar being denied entry into Palestine/Israel is not a freedom of speech issue (as in McCarthyism in Israel’s right-wing government). It is an issue of Israel and all its governments past and present denying and subjugating the Palestinian people since 1948. What needs to be highlighted is freedom, justice and equality for the Palestinian people, not freedom of speech in so-called democracies.

Palestinian-American legal scholar and human rights attorney Noura Erekat got it right. She commented on Facebook:

The fact that Palestinians can't welcome Rashida [#Tlaib](#) & Ilhan [#Omar](#) on their own should indicate clearly to the world the lack of parity by Israel — an apartheid state- & Palestinians — a stateless people whom they continue to control, cage, & oppress. We are alive because of our resistance.

The belief or idea that this story “lends itself” to references to Israel’s long-running falsehood of “the only democracy in the Middle East” is outrageous, because Israel’s values and orientation have long been exposed as apartheid Jewish supremacist. Nobody is concerned or “wonders” about Israel’s so-called “liberal and democratic values” except so-called liberal Zionists.


And yet we persist in using terminology and purveying notions (directly and indirectly) coined for us by Zionist propaganda guidelines. As [Palestine Legal](#) posted in reference to similar current discourse on Israel/Palestine:

Using the IHRA’s poor definition of antisemitism, [Israel advocates] have succeeded in completely changing the discourse: rather than talk about the occupation, the Nakba, or its violation of national, human and civil rights, the dominant public discourse now revolves around what is or is not forbidden when it comes to criticism of Israel, and to what extent said criticism is antisemitic.

Withholding clear, unambiguous language from our forums continues to embolden racist apologists for Israel and agitators such as the [following](#):

... In a discussion tinged with racism, Jewish power brokers in Detroit have vowed to get Rep Rashida Tlaib (D-MI) out of office at any cost — “for Jewish reasons”...

Many “impartial observers” are fed up with the use of language in reports that beam insidious subliminal messages at us. A few days ago, after coming across report after report of unspeakable crimes against Palestinians committed by Israeli Jews colonizing the West Bank who were being uniformly referred to as “Israeli settlers”, I posted the following meme.



**I am sick of reading about
"Israeli settlers"! Call them by
what they are: Jewish
supremacists.**

The meme resonated with many. Some wrote suggesting other names:

- Illegal racist terrorists in Palestine
- Jewish colonizers at least...
- Extremist colonists
- Prefer squatters
- Prefer fascists
- Fascist squatter colonizers.
- Illegal SQUATTERS
- Zionist supremacists
- They are terrorists

Our language on current events concerning Israel/Palestine must project a decolonial future in Israel. Otherwise, we will never be able to shift the political paradigm in all of historic Palestine to one democratic secular state. A “reformed” Zionist reality, as in a “truly democratic” Jewish state, is a contradiction in terms. It is high time we moved on to a post Zionist reality.

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Note to readers: please click the share buttons above or below. Forward this article to your email lists. Crosspost on your blog site, internet forums. etc.

Rima Najjar is a Palestinian whose father's side of the family comes from the forcibly depopulated village of Lifta on the western outskirts of Jerusalem. She is an activist, researcher and retired professor of English literature, Al-Quds University, occupied West Bank. She is a frequent contributor to Global Research.

Featured image: Photo from November 2018 of then congresswomen-elect Rashida Tlaib (left) of Michigan, and Ilhan Omar of Minnesota. (Photo: Twitter/Rashida Tlaib)

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