

# U.S. Rejectionist Policy Toward Palestinian Participation, Rights

By [Rima Najjar](#)

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Region: [Middle East & North Africa, USA](#)

Theme: [Law and Justice](#)

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*Upon hearing [the news](#) that Palestinian diplomat Dr. Hanan Ashrawi had been denied entry to the United States on a speaking engagement, my husband wrote an e-mail to Indiana Senator Mike Braun titled, 'Tell State Dept & Trump to give Ashrawi a visa now!'*

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His letter was brief and to the point:

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Dear Senator Braun:

The State Department under President Trump is denying widely respected Palestinian leader Hanan Ashrawi a visa to visit the U.S.

Ashrawi has visited the U.S. frequently ever since she studied for her PhD here several decades ago. She has met with every Secretary of State since George Schultz and every President since President George Bush Senior.

Ashrawi has been critical of the Trump administration.

US law does not authorize the refusal of visas based solely on political statements or views. A State Department spokesman says: 'Visas may be denied only on grounds set out in US law.'

Tell Trump to stop denying her a visa!

Sincerely,

J. Merriman

It took Senator Braun over a month to respond. His e-mail reads, in part:

"In May of 2019, Hanan Ashrawi claimed she was denied a visa to the United States. Visas cannot be denied based on political statements but may be denied only on grounds established by U.S. law." (Bolded text mine)

## United States Senate

June 19, 2019

Dear Mr. Merriman,

Thank you for contacting my office regarding the visa status of Hanan Ashrawi. I appreciate hearing from you on this important issue.

In May of 2019, Hanan Ashrawi **claimed** she was denied a visa to the United States. Visas cannot be denied based on political statements but may be denied only on grounds established by U.S. law.

My Indianapolis office stands at the ready to assist constituents with their visa issues, and my office can be reached at [317-822-8240](tel:317-822-8240). Due to the nature of this work, we ask that requests come from someone who lives in Indiana or has a personal connection with someone in the state.

Thank you for contacting me. It is an honor to serve as your U.S. Senator from Indiana. Please keep in touch with me on issues of concern to you. You can also follow me on Twitter or Facebook for real-time updates on my activities in the U.S. Senate. If I ever may be of service, please do not hesitate to contact me.

Sincerely,



Mike Braun

U.S. Senator

P.S. This message was sent by email to save taxpayer dollars.

We understood his response to mean that Dr. Hanan Ashrawi was lying about the reasons for the U.S. denying her a visa, and that means she must be in violation of some U.S. law.

Here is a news item that includes what Dr. Hanan Ashrawi herself has to say about the matter:

The US denies PLO Executive Committee Member Dr. Hanan Ashrawi a visa. She says this represents the overall denigration of Israeli-Palestinian peace talks. Watch the full discussion:

Senator Braun's allusion to "grounds established by U.S. law" made me wonder about relevant laws. I asked my niece, a human rights attorney practicing in Chicago, who sent me the following information:

The State Department [says](#),

"If denied a visa, in most cases the applicant is notified of the section of law which applies." Since Dr. Ashrawi was apparently not provided a reason, we are forced to speculate.

My own speculation goes along the following lines: Could it be the State Department has labeled Dr. Ashrawi a "terrorist supporter" based on the Immigration and Nationality Act, which states:

(IV) is a representative (as defined in clause (v)) of—(bb) a political, social, or other group that endorses or espouses terrorist activity;

That can't possibly be true—despite the New York based Zionist journal *The Algemeiner's* blaring in a headline that 'MESA Demands US Welcome Palestinian Terror Apologist Hanan Ashrawi.'

Dr Ashrawi, founder of the [Independent Commission for Human Rights](#) and the recipient of numerous awards from all over the world, including the distinguished French decoration, "[d'Officier de l'Ordre National de la Légion d'Honneur](#)", is not politically affiliated with the Palestinian group the U.S. has labeled terrorist (Hamas), and the Trump administration has yet to declare the Palestinian Authority and the Palestine Liberation Organization (PLO) terror groups.

Another, more likely, reason for exclusion according to the Immigration and Nationality Act is:

© Foreign policy.—(i) In general.—An alien whose entry or proposed activities in the United States the Secretary of State has reasonable ground to believe would have potentially serious adverse foreign policy consequences for the United States is inadmissible.

But how can Dr Ashrawi represent "serious adverse policy consequences" to U.S. foreign policy? Well, only if you understand the United States' role in brokering a peace between Israel and the Palestinians to be so skewed in Israel's favor, that it is reasonable for the State Department to prevent a well-spoken Palestinian representative from entering the United States and presenting the Palestinian cause to the American public.

And that is, indeed, the case. The U.S. has always been a "dishonest broker" when it came to its role in Israel/Palestine, as Naseer H. Aruri amply demonstrates in his 2003 book of that title.

Aruri writes:

Consequently, they have prolonged the occupation and obstructed the opportunity for peace with justice—the only peace that can promise an enduring coexistence between [Palestinian] Arabs and [Israeli] Jews, and the only peace capable of transforming the political landscape of the Middle East from a perpetual battleground to a terrain of dignity, reciprocity, mutuality, freedom, and self-determination."

What's more, the Immigration and Nationality Act cites other provisions for exclusion from the United States that, in fact, apply to the Israeli government, and by extension, to its diplomatic corps, rather than to the Palestinian Authority or the PLO—and by extension to Dr. Ashrawi:

(E) PARTICIPANTS IN NAZI PERSECUTION, GENOCIDE, OR THE COMMISSION OF ANY ACT OF TORTURE OR EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLING

(iii) COMMISSION OF ACTS OF TORTURE OR EXTRAJUDICIAL KILLINGS- Any alien

who, outside the United States, has committed, ordered, incited, assisted, or otherwise participated in the commission of—  
(I) any act of torture, as defined in section 2340 of title 18, United States Code; or  
(II) under color of law of any foreign nation, any extrajudicial killing, as defined in section 3(a) of the Torture Victim Protection Act of 1991 (28 U.S.C. 1350 note), is inadmissible.

Genocide, acts of torture against Palestinian children as well as adults, and extrajudicial killings have all been documented against Israel. And yet, an Israeli prime minister is invited to [address](#) a joint meeting of Congress.

The outrageous attack on Palestinian freedom of expression that the United States has exercised in this case is only the latest assault on Palestinian rights carried out by the U.S. government—as well as by other similarly-minded governments—for example, in Germany, as [Samidoun: Palestinian Prisoner Solidarity Network](#), an international network of organizers and activists working to build solidarity with Palestinian prisoners in their struggle for freedom, [documents](#):

The repression of Palestinian rights advocacy in Germany continued last night, Saturday, 22 June, as Palestinian writer [Khaled Barakat](#) was banned by the Berlin authorities from delivering a speech on the so-called “deal of the century” spearheaded by Donald Trump and the Arab and Palestinian response. He was also banned from engaging in all political activities and events in Germany until 31 July, whether directly (in-person) or “indirectly” (over video.) This outrageous attack on freedom of expression is only the latest assault on Palestinian rights carried out by the German government.

The U.S. Department of State ought to be working closely with Palestinian leaders, legislators, activists, writers and scholars in order to fashion its foreign policy on Israel/Palestine. Instead, it is forcing “normalization” on Arab states without Palestine, something that will never, ever lead to justice and peace. The denial of a visa to Dr. Hanan Ashrawi simply highlights the outright U.S. rejectionist policy toward Palestinian participation and Palestinian rights.

By shutting down the much-needed debate on Zionist history and the nature of the Zionist state, the U.S. government and its allies continue to impose a Western imperial project on the Middle East.

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*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.*

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