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PRES. BIDEN CAMPAIGN DISRUPTION IN CHARLESTON
PRESENTED BY FREE PALESTINE CHARLESTON

JAN 8, 1:00 PM EST, CHARLESTON - Ten members of **Free Palestine Charleston** on Jan. 8 participated in a disruption to **call for a ceasefire in Gaza during Pres. Joe Biden's speech at Mother Emanuel AME Church in Charleston**. A crowd of **people simultaneously gathered at a permitted event in Marion Square** to show our support for Palestine.

Biden's refusal to call for a ceasefire, ongoing arms transfers to Israel without Congress approval, and failure to acknowledge that Israel's actions constitute genocide as outlined in the U.N. Genocide Convention (a treaty that the United States is a signatory to) demonstrates that he is more than complicit in genocide; **he is an active participant**.

Free Palestine CHS recognizes the **delicate nature of this action** given the Mother Emanuel AME massacre less than a decade prior, and the sanctity of the church itself to many members of the community. The nonviolent demonstration was planned by local Black and Palestinian in consultation with members of the AME community to respect the church's history.

*We decided the best way to **honor the church's mass shooting victims and its long history as a site of civil disobedience** would be to wait until Pres. Joe Biden began his speech to **disrupt**, rather than detracting from any of the church's esteemed Black elders or devaluing a place of worship. But to be clear, this was not a church service; it was a political campaign event. Several Black congregants associated with Free Palestine CHS were also singled out and denied entry to the event, including lead Charleston Black Lives Matter organizer Marcus McDonald.*

"We find it so disrespectful that President Biden has come to the place of a massacre while actively benefiting and promoting a genocide and a massacre in Gaza," McDonald said.

"My church missed the mark. It missed the call of Jesus to choose the oppressed—the orphan, the widow, and the refugee—over the empire. President Biden has no place speaking from our pulpit to invoke the lives lost at Emanuel while simultaneously ignoring the thousands of lives lost in Gaza, the bombing of Bethlehem, and apartheid in the Holy Land. I stand in the heritage of protest that birthed the AME church to issue the only righteous call: to "study war no more." We are not free until Palestine is free," said Pastor Darien Jones of Moncks Corner AME.

As residents and community members of Charleston, we know that **all struggles for liberation are intertwined**. Atrocities committed against Black folks in the U.S. and Palestinians in Gaza have always belonged to the same system of violence. Bishop Samuel L. Green spoke of Malcolm X and James Baldwin as two righteous leaders in his introductory remarks — both

famously strongly supported Palestine for their entire lives and careers as civil right activists. **So, as one of our members said to begin the disruption:** If you really care about the lives lost here, then you should honor the lives lost and call for a ceasefire in Palestine!

We must pressure our elected officials at the local, state and federal levels. But our work doesn't begin or end with a ceasefire. We believe liberation means freedom and justice for all those living in occupied Palestine. We believe in humanity and joy — not only an end to this horrific genocide, but a world in which Palestinians can grow old alongside their friends and family. We acknowledge the absurdity of having to even make this ask.

Our demands include the following:

1. **An end to the deadly exchange** — the transfer and manufacturing of weapons among the Israeli government, the United States government and oppressive government regimes throughout the world. Among the exchange 2022 program participants was Deputy **Chief Dustin Thompson, Operations Bureau Commander. Charleston Police Department Charleston ex-chief of police**, the late Luther Reynolds, participated in 2018. **Greg Mullen, the chief of police prior to Reynolds**, attended the delegation in February 2008, when it was known as the Law Enforcement Exchange Program (LEEP). And former **sheriff Al Cannon** attended a similar summit in Israel in 2009. His trip cost \$3,000 and was financed via “seized drug funds,” the *S.C. Post & Courier* wrote.
2. **An end to the normalization of Zionism and violence against Palestinians** in every aspect of our lives, including but not limited to media narratives, institutional support, and government backing. Zionism is a political ideology, rooted in white supremacy and Western imperialism that promotes the belief in the establishment of a Jewish state on historic Palestinian land. Evangelical Zionism funds the majority of contributions to Israel and is one of the most powerful lobbies in politics.
3. **Accountability for elected officials** who actively support – and even praise – Israel's war crimes. Our State Treasurer recently signed a bond allotting \$30 million of our tax dollars to further Israel's mass murder of Palestinian men, women and children. We do not want our tax dollars supporting genocide!
4. **An end to Elbit Systems**, a facility manufacturing weapons the IOF currently uses to commit its crimes against humanity, operating in Ladson, South Carolina. Elbit Systems, invested \$35 million in the relocation and recently opened its 135,000 square foot plant in Ladson. It receives tax cuts for its investment: “A 2019 fiscal year report disclosed that companies' extra revenue diverted \$423 million from public schools across the state, disproportionately low-income schools with mostly Black and brown students.” The Elbit facility is projected to begin 155mm howitzer deliveries to the Israeli Defense Forces by 2025, automated land vehicles repeatedly used to carry out documented war crimes in Lebanon and Gaza.

5. A free Palestine.

We refuse to remain silent. Our peaceful act of disruption during Biden's speech — including full compliance with US Secret Service agents — and the demonstration at Marion Square were committed to that end— drawing attention to the horrors our elected officials want us to forget about, despite funding them with our tax dollars. Pres. Biden responded to our action with a vague mumbling about how he is negotiating with the Israeli government: **we need more than empty promises and ambiguous words.**

From Holy City to Holy City: Charleston demands a ceasefire, a free Palestine, and an end to Charleston taxpayer money funding Israel.

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Free Palestine CHS is a multicultural, grassroots collective committed to an anti-imperialist, anti-colonial, and anti-Zionist framework for Palestinian liberation. We believe in the dignity and sovereignty of all people in occupied Palestine. You can find out more about our work here: www.linktr.ee/freepalestinechs