

# CITIES FOR PALESTINE

## WHY ORGANIZE A MUNICIPAL CAMPAIGN?

Palestinian rights are human rights. As people in the US concerned with human rights, and as part of a global movement in solidarity with the Palestinian people, we have a duty. That duty is to actively work for freedom, justice, and equality in order to counter the harm US policies, including the use of our tax dollars, cause to Palestinians. Through municipal campaigns, people supportive of Palestinian rights can make Palestine part of the local progressive agenda.

From the South African anti-apartheid movement to environmental justice campaigns that focus on divestment from fossil fuels to prison abolition, municipal campaigns are a tried-and-true strategy that prove the efficacy of organizing locally to impact national and global causes. Municipal campaigns focus on engaging directly with policy makers, building capacity and activating the power of everyday people to impact decision-makers locally. In turn, this work reverberates to help move decision-makers at local, state, and federal levels and ultimately, we move closer and closer to changing the US policies that enable Israel's denial of Palestinian rights.

Focusing on local opportunities to discuss Palestine helps us continue to shift public opinion so that US support for Israel eventually becomes unsustainable. Municipal campaigns also provide a chance to expand your local base to continue organizing for Palestine and to build political power alongside others pushing for social justice in our communities. For instance, many of our cities and towns are already actively resisting, to demand that local governments provide protection to immigrants and refugees, divest from incarceration and criminalization, and invest in education and healthcare.

There have been many successful municipal campaigns supporting Palestinian rights over the years. This toolkit will help you with implementing them in your own community!

*Note: Municipal campaigns refers to work with local governments. For simplicity, we used "cities" as shorthand throughout this toolkit, but everything herein could also apply in towns, suburbs, rural areas, counties, and states.*

## INVEST IN FREEDOM - DIVEST FROM INJUSTICE FRAMEWORK

The campaign ideas laid out in this toolkit are intended to be implemented as part of an overall commitment by communities to invest in freedom while divesting from injustice. This means understanding the connections between local demands related to the Palestinian struggle for freedom, justice, and equality and the demands of Black, brown, and Indigenous communities. These campaigns in support of Palestinian rights should be built and carried out in ways that also strengthen and build with other movements.

The invest-divest framework that we build on below is learned from the Movement for Black Lives. In 2016, the Movement for Black Lives issued the [Vision For Black Lives Policy Platform](#), which laid out policy demands for Black power, freedom, and justice such as ending the war on Black people, enacting reparations, and creating economic justice. The [Invest-Divest](#) section of the platform focuses on investments in the education, health, and

safety of Black people, and divestment from exploitative forces including prisons, fossil fuels, police, surveillance, and corporations. Invest-Divest also calls for a cut in US military expenditures, including weapons to Israel, and a reallocation of those funds to invest in domestic infrastructure and community well-being.

The Freedom Cities [platform](#), borne out of the relationships built between workers and immigrants organizing across sectors in New York City, is another example of policy visions that bring together the demands of movements working for racial and economic justice. The Freedom Cities [organizing principles](#) are an important reference for all of our campaigns.

Our efforts remain in response to the Palestinian civil society call for boycott, divestment, and sanctions (BDS) to pressure Israel to comply with international law. Inspired and guided by the Movement for Black Lives and Freedom Cities Platforms, we can strive to create the world we want to see now, and push the struggle for freedom, justice, and equality in rural areas, suburbs, towns, and cities.

## SUGGESTED CAMPAIGN IDEAS

Below are eight municipal campaign ideas to help you start thinking about what works for your community at [citiesforpalestine.org](http://citiesforpalestine.org).

### 1) Invest/Divest

Our cities should end their support for Israel's human rights abuses and all institutions of oppression. Divestment and boycotts are tangible actions to ensure our tax dollars aren't spent on contracting with or investing in Israel's apartheid regime or corporations profiting from state violence.

*Consider coupling your demands to divest or cut contracts with a demand to reinvest in community needs. There are likely already reinvestment demands being voiced by grassroots organizations in your community. Do the research and relationship-building with those groups to lift up their work and demands.*

#### What can you do?

- Pass legislation for your local government to either adopt or pursue a general human rights screen for its business with corporations, and then work to implement it.
- Pass legislation for your local government to end or refuse to accept contracts with one or more specific corporations complicit in Israeli human rights abuses.
- Pass legislation for your local government/county/state to divest from Israel bonds.

### 2) End the Deadly Exchange between US and Israel

Organizations with long histories of opposing or undermining the struggle for Palestinian rights, such as the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), sponsor trips to Israel for US police chiefs, sheriffs, ICE agents, and border patrol, where they trade surveillance and militarized policing tactics with Israeli armed forces under shared racist ideologies. These, and other local partnerships between US and Israeli police and military, defend and valorize Israel's system of military occupation while also reinforcing the racism and violence of US policing.

*Palestinian-led groups have a long history of challenging US-Israeli militarization partnerships. Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is running a national campaign opposing the ADL's programs in particular. Locally, some groups are working to oppose US-Israel police exchanges more broadly. Learn more about the campaign at [deadlyexchange.org](https://deadlyexchange.org).*

#### **What can you do?**

- Pass legislation in your local government to challenge police militarization, including by ending US-Israeli police exchanges and redirecting funds spent on police militarization programs to instead invest in local community needs..
- Pass legislation that your local government will not participate in police trainings and international weapons expos, which commonly include Israel and other repressive states.

### **3) Skip the Trip: End Propaganda Trips to Israel**

At the same time that Israel denies Palestinians their freedom of movement and bans millions of refugees from returning to their homes, pro-Israel groups fund trips for US public officials to freely travel to Israel. These trips strengthen US political support for Israel by whitewashing Israel's human rights violations.

#### **What can you do?**

- Petition specific city/county/state legislators to pledge publicly they will boycott such an opportunity when/if invited.
- Pass legislation to implement a code of ethics for public officials related to such trips. Check if such trips violate existing ethics rules and if so, use those existing rules as leverage for public pressure against the trip.
- Pressure politicians who have gone on these trips to disclose trip details, funders, and what they were expected to do once back.

### **4) End Weapons to Israel**

Israeli forces kill and injure Palestinians with the help of billions of dollars in weapons provided by the US every year. The \$3.8 billion dollars in weapons we provide to Israel annually could be used instead to fund urgent needs in our communities. Find more information at [militaryaidtoisrael.org](https://militaryaidtoisrael.org).

#### **What can you do?**

- Pass a resolution calling on the US government to end military aid to Israel and redirect that money to unmet community needs.

### **5) Right to Boycott**

Boycotts are a tried-and-true tactic, in the US and internationally, to achieve social change. But Israel and its supporters are pushing for local and federal legislation to punish and even criminalize our right to boycott for Palestinian rights.

#### **What can you do?**

- Pass a local government/county/state resolution reaffirming that engaging in boycotts are a protected First Amendment right and that BDS campaigns should be commended for advancing Palestinian rights.

### **6) Stand with Refugees**

Palestinian refugees are the longest-standing and second-largest refugee population in the world. US military, diplomatic, and economic support for Israel enables its continued denial of Palestinian refugees' right of return to their homes and lands as stipulated by international law. Meanwhile, the US continues to shut its borders to refugees, many of whom are fleeing US-backed wars.

#### **What can you do?**

- Pass a resolution that reaffirms the right of return for Palestinian refugees as part of your community's commitment to resolving the global refugee crisis.
- Work with councilmembers to host a World Refugee Day (June 20) event or put out a World Refugee Day statement that names Palestinian cities from which Palestinian-Americans in your town have been displaced, alongside other refugee communities.
- Pass expanded sanctuary legislation that includes the city's official statement of support for refugees, including Palestinian refugees, to not only be welcome in our community but also to claim their right to return home.

### **7) Sister Cities**

Invest in justice by building genuine connections between US and Palestinian cities, towns, villages, or refugee camps through a sister city relationship. Sister Cities promote ties between community members in both places to learn about each other's lives and work together on projects to support one another. Sister Cities have transformed US city officials' and other residents' understanding of what is happening in Palestine through personal and official connections with Palestinians living under Israeli occupations. Sister Cities also open the door to delegations to Palestine, including by city officials.

#### **What can you do?**

- Establish a sister city relationship between your city and a city, town, village, or refugee camp in Palestine. Maintain and grow that relationship in the years to come.

### **8) Break the Bonds**

Israel and its supporters seek to improve its negative image – created through decades of human rights violations and apartheid – through a propaganda effort dubbed Brand Israel. Brand Israel aims to whitewash Israel's crimes by promoting relationships and activities encompassing cultural, sports, faith, hi-tech, legal, academic, and other realms. Brand Israel is meant to normalize Israel's denial of Palestinian rights, pushing it to become accepted as the status quo and reframing the issue so that Palestinian resistance is cast as the actual problem. As you consider this campaign, think about what ties exist between Israel and your local government officials.

What ties exist between Israel and your local government officials? Does your local government provide support for cultural projects (e.g. film festivals, performances by Israeli cultural ambassadors) that whitewash Israel's war crimes? Does your community host forums with Israel on issues such as environmental preservation or queer rights as part of Israel's greenwashing or pinkwashing campaigns? Do your public officials participate in projects sponsored by the Jewish National Fund or other organizations complicit in Israel's displacement or settlements?

**What can you do?**

- Exert direct public pressure on local government officials to end projects underway that you discover that whitewash Israel's war crimes.

**PREPARING YOUR CAMPAIGN****Who?**

A critical piece of any campaign is building and sustaining a group of people who are energized and committed, as campaigns can take months or even years. If you are not already part of a group, join an existing USCPR member group ([uscpr.org/membership](https://uscpr.org/membership)), or reach out to other people in your community to form one. If there is more than one Palestine organizing group in your city, consider coming together in coalition as you begin your process of thinking through what campaign is right for your locale. One purpose of organizing a group is sustainability: you want to ensure that once your municipal campaign is completed, you are in a stronger position to continue advocating for Palestinian rights through new avenues opened up by your hard work.

**What?**

The campaign target will be the decision-maker(s) with the power to fulfill your demand, usually local government officials. The campaign demand is up to you. In choosing a campaign, local context is important. While you can draw lessons from other cities to strengthen your own efforts, the campaign you choose should be in line with what local organizing is already happening, what particular policies your local government already has that you can use, and what political environment you're working in, since that shapes what's possible for your target local public officials.

**Questions to Answer With Your Group**

- **What are your local group's long-term goals?** We frequently delve into choosing a campaign without stepping back and considering what we hope will be the lasting impact of your campaign. While winning is important, there are always secondary goals that should factor into considerations, such as raising awareness about Palestine and bringing new people into your organizing. Doing, and hopefully winning, a municipal campaign should set the stage for new people in your community to engage on Palestine and more excitement for future campaigns. Make sure to think ahead!
- **What is the potential for success?** Does the campaign have a realistic chance of success beyond raising awareness? Which campaign will local officials feel they can support without being completely overrun by opposition? Does your local government body already have existing policies regarding human rights or a history of passing resolutions that might give you a precedent to reference? Do you have existing relationships with city council members and know what issues interest them?
- **What will help build coalitions with other social justice struggles?** Is there a particular campaign that could also appeal to other social justice groups in your city? Think carefully about how a campaign that includes justice in Palestine could contribute to, and build power for, the organizing and campaigning already underway in your city. For example, is there a local ACLU chapter which would be

interested in helping pass a resolution supporting the right to boycott as a First Amendment issue? Would local groups fighting mass incarceration, climate change, or the US/Mexico border wall have interest in passing a universal human rights screen ending city business with corporations involved in all human rights abuses? Would local groups fighting police violence want to partner on a demilitarization of police campaign, including an end to US-Israel police exchanges? Are there ongoing efforts to show solidarity with refugees to which you can link the rights of Palestinian refugees?

In all our organizing, we must support liberation for all oppressed communities. This means de-exceptionalizing Palestine and understanding Israeli apartheid within a broader context of global white supremacy, connections to US empire, and repressive regimes. Cross-movement campaigns should grow power across struggles, not only for Palestine. You can find more resources about the links between struggles at [uscpr.org/togetherwerise](http://uscpr.org/togetherwerise).

- **What will engage broad support and build awareness?** Based on your local political environment, which campaign has the potential to generate enough local controversy to catch the attention of the public and media? What will show people that Palestine is, in fact, a local issue and bring in new people?

### Power Mapping and Research

- **Research local government politics, procedures, and/or investments/ties with Israel. Your local government's website is a great place to start.**
  - Find out if your local government has existing policies regarding human rights, violent conflict, or discrimination, or a history of passing other resolutions that would give a precedent to your campaign.
  - Find out which corporations your city is already invested in or contracting with, if any of those corporations are complicit in Israel's denial of Palestinian rights, and if any of those contracts are up for renewal. *Note that the absence of such companies does not prevent you from establishing a screen that would preemptively prevent future business with those companies.*
  - Learn about the process by which policy is set and legislation is passed in your local government system.
  - If your city has relevant committees whose power and resources can be leveraged in support of a campaign, determine if members of your group can be nominated or elected to become committee members, or even city council members.
- **Power map your local elected officials** before launching your campaign. Research voting records, political affiliations, community involvement, and philanthropy. Ask questions such as:
  - Have any local elected officials spoken out for Palestinian rights in the past?
  - Are any local elected officials champions of other social justice issues that relate to your demand? For example, a city councilor concerned about mass incarceration in their community may also be interested in that issue in the context of Israel's mass incarceration of Palestinians, including children.

- Who are influencers for each local elected official? These may be other elected officials, community and/or religious leaders, members of the media, donors, etc. Influencers can have a major impact on the decisions of elected officials.
- Have any local elected officials defended and/or promoted Israel in the past? What was their motivation for doing so?
- LittleSis.org (as opposed to Big Brother) has a free, crowd-sourced database and has online trainings to track, map, and connect the dots between corporations, politicians, and billionaires behind our cities' policies.

The end result of your power mapping will give you a sense of which elected officials will be likely to support your campaign, which will be indifferent and need to be won over, and which will probably be hostile.

### **Setting Goals and Timeline**

Identify concrete goals for your campaign. These should include not only your end goal – fulfillment of your demand – but also short- and medium-term goals along the way.

Examples:

- Get eight local organizations to endorse your campaign by [date]
- Get 65 people to your launch event
- Get 1,000 signatures from local residents on a petition that you will deliver to the city council on [date]
- Generate three media hits (articles, op-eds, letters) by [date]
- Meet with the all council members by [date]
- Grow your core organizing group by five members by [date]

Goals should be SMART: specific, measurable, achievable, realistic for your capacity and local context, and timely. It's okay if you need to adjust your goals along the way – they are useful as goalposts to keep things moving.

### **Build a Campaign Timeline**

Work backwards to calendar out the steps you need to reach the goals you have determined. Make sure that you're building broad momentum and excitement as well as pressure on your target along the way. Keep the election cycle in mind! You may be able to make your campaign into an election issue by asking questions at candidate debates, or if there is a candidate to whom your group is connected who is willing to include support for your campaign as part of their platform. On the flip side, if your resolution is asking officials to take some risk, they may be more averse before an election than after one.

### **Resources and Fundraising**

Determine the resources you will need for you campaign and how you can fundraise for them. You can find some sample resources from past campaigns such as research tips, graphics, and resolutions at [citiesforpalestine.org](http://citiesforpalestine.org). Think creatively about how you can fundraise for your campaign to create your own graphics and videos, print out flyers, place local ads, or buy supplies for actions.

## **BUILDING A COALITION & GATHERING ENDORSEMENTS**

A common mistake is first picking a campaign and then trying to recruit people to join you. Collective decision-making ensures that as many people as possible feel the ownership necessary to see through a campaign with all its ups and downs. Start by building your group or coalition, building personal relationships, and establishing a foundation of trust and shared principles within a broader anti-oppression framework that takes into consideration race, class, gender, and other power dynamics.

Immigrant rights groups, unions, environmental groups, and prison abolition groups can work in coalition to win in a way that builds power across the multiple important social justice struggles. In a coalition, each constituency will bring its own framing, understanding of accountability, capacity levels, and organizing cultures, which should be respected and seen as a campaign strength. In the long run, inclusivity and shared power are more important to the health and success of your campaign than perfection and speed. If some coalition members are unable to put in as much work to the campaign as your group, find a way to still include them in decision-making. Strong relationships, good communication, and clear shared principles are the building blocks of a powerful coalition.

In addition, you should be reaching out for endorsements, especially from people or groups who carry weight with city councilmembers. These can be statements of support from celebrities, Palestinian groups, national groups, or leaders and organizations in your city. You might offer a ladder of endorsement options, from taking a picture with a sign of support, to calling council members, to writing a public letter of endorsement.

With both coalition building and endorsements, ask yourself if you have been showing up for the groups to which you are reaching out. It cannot go only one way, and it cannot be transactional (“I will come to/support your thing if you come to/support mine”). Show up because you are invested in those groups’ own missions and liberation struggles, not just their possible support for the Palestinian struggle. Don’t try to recruit other marginalized communities by telling them how you think their struggles link up with Palestine. Also, consider who in your group should approach those communities. For example, Palestinian members of your coalition reaching out to connect with Black, brown, or Indigenous groups is much more appropriate than white solidarity activists attempting to connect with these groups through Palestine activism.

## LAUNCHING YOUR CAMPAIGN

Before publicly launching your campaign, it is always best to approach elected officials who are likely to be most sympathetic. Getting one or more elected officials to agree to introduce and champion a resolution in the city council is much more likely to result in success than launching a campaign and then hoping to convince an elected official to support it.

**How do you know when you’re finally ready to launch? Here’s a checklist of some important pieces that should tell you if you’re ready to go:**

- You have a solid group of at least five people who work well together and are willing to put in the work to get your campaign off the ground and sustain it.
- You are working in coalition with other marginalized groups, and have been showing up in genuine solidarity with other social justice movements.



- You've done your research and worked with coalition partners to pick an appropriate campaign.
- You have mapped out your goals and a timeline.
- You've reached out privately to sympathetic officials for support.
- You've reached out to organizations and key individuals for endorsements and other support.
- You have a first draft of a resolution and have drafted broader campaign messaging.
- You have created and have someone managing most or all of these: a website, Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram account.
- You have scheduled upcoming teach-ins or other events for people to learn more about your campaign and plug into it.

**Here are some ways you can announce and launch your campaign:**

- Press release, op-ed, press conference, or and/or photo op. If you can tie this to current events, all the better.
- Polished launch video featuring broad voices on why they support the campaign.
- A social media splash to create lots of buzz.
- An kick-off event for the new campaign.
- Visible presence with tabling, canvassing, t-shirts, buttons, banners, tabling, other SWAG.

Consider using the launch hype and energy to gather signatures on a petition, which will also help you collect contact information for campaign supporters whom you can mobilize moving forward.

## ENGAGING LOCAL OFFICIALS

This section covers engagement with local officials. Consider the option of getting people elected from your organizing community by running people for city council or for committees within local government whose work might relate to the campaigns suggested above. Having a campaign champion is hugely important, and as Palestine organizing builds political power, we should be ready to move from the margins into decision-making positions, rather than relying on those in power to do the right thing.

A primary way of building support for your campaign will be **meeting directly with elected officials or their staff**. Here are some tips for these meetings.

- Know if the city councilor represents a certain district of the city or the entirety of the city (known as "at-large"). Note that cities tend to use one model or the other and even sometimes mix the two systems.
- Center the voices of constituents. Elected officials are always more likely to be influenced by the views of their constituents.
- Bring along influencers of the elected official to the meeting (see above).
- Bring materials showing your elected officials that their constituents want them to take this action. These meetings are a great time to deliver petitions, letters, etc.
- Bring a "leave-behind" packet with the text of the resolution, as well as some background information about your campaign, group, and the underlying issues. For example, if you are campaigning to get the city council to pass a resolution to end military aid to Israel, bring a human rights report and/or good article about the

impact of these weapons on Palestinians. Then, follow up by email and share digital copies of these resources.

- Beyond city officials, building relationships with other local government staff, for example those that deal with investments, is also important.

Meetings are critical, but they are not your only opportunity to influence your elected officials. **Consider planning to take a variety of escalating or increasingly public tactics,** so that you make your demand of elected officials and then steadily ramp up the pressure.

- Organize presences at their town hall or other public meetings (bring signs, wear t-shirts, etc. to these meetings to visibly show public support and have several people prepared to speak about your campaign and resolution).
- Run social media campaigns. Tweet at officials, post on their Facebook pages, etc.
- Organize call-in days and emails from constituents. Most city council members have their direct contact information posted on their official webpages. USCPR also has technology to help you generate emails to the correct local officials. Ask us for help!
- Write op-eds and letters to the editor which mention the names of the elected officials you are trying to influence.
- Call in to radio or TV programs in which officials are participating to ask them a question directly.
- Invite the elected official and their staff to public campaign events. Consider using any of the tactics above to make sure that your ask is heard loud and clear.
- If officials refuse to meet or respond to their constituents' concerns, as a last resort, you can show up at their offices demanding a meeting. Bring reporters with you, film it, and share the video on social media if publicizing will help you achieve your goals. This tactic can be an opportunity to escalate pressure on an official to get a needed meeting or response, or to publicly shame an official who has made clear they have no interest in Palestinian rights (in some cases despite claiming to be a progressive).

**Here are some other things to keep in mind while engaging your local elected officials:**

- Always thank your local elected official, both publicly and privately, for doing what you want. They will likely receive pushback for supporting Palestinian rights, so it's vitally important that we show elected officials community support when they take the right stance.
- One size does not fit all. Some asks are easy lifts, others are heavy. Sometimes a casual encounter with your progressive local elected official at the farmers market will be all that it will take to get them on board. Most other times though, it will be much more difficult. Don't expect one meeting to do the trick. If your elected official won't sign on to your resolution after one meeting, then develop a plan to ratchet up the pressure. Maybe signatures from 100 or 1,000 constituents will do it, or maybe raising the issue repeatedly at a town hall will work.
- Avoid expending valuable resources trying to convince someone who is hostile. Local elected officials who are ardent supporters of Israel, no matter the information you provide or the pressure you exert, are not likely to change their minds and become allies. More likely, they are working with local Israel advocacy organizations to thwart your campaign. Build a successful campaign that gets you a path to victory on the city council despite their efforts.

## ORGANIZING & ESCALATING TACTICS

**Your tactics should flow from your goals.** What will help you reach your targets and achieve your goals? What you do for education vs. generating media vs. appealing to your target may require different tactics or tone. Be strategic: don't hold flash mobs just for the fun of it!

**Here are some other ideas to gradually build pressure on your target officials:**

- Canvass and petition in spaces where there are constituents of your targets. Make sure you have an action for people to take.
- Host informational events on Palestine and partner struggles such as teach-ins, speaking events, film screenings, etc. Every event should funnel people into taking action in support of the campaign.
- Write op-eds or letters for local media. Activate allies to support with media pieces as well.
- Social media campaigns
- Vigils or interfaith prayer circles
- Erecting mock walls and/or mock checkpoints
- Demonstrations, including flash mobs, guerilla street theater, and other creative actions
- Non-cooperation and direct action
- Invite members of the press to events, and if there is a big event or campaign development, consider holding a press conference.

## DEALING WITH OPPOSITION

Campaigns for justice for Palestine are under increasing attack, but with preparation for the backlash, it's often still possible to win. To begin with, make clear in all your messaging that you are committed to justice for all, so it's clear that it is the opposition, not you, that is making an exception for Israel.

Backlash takes many forms. For example, after the New Orleans City Council unanimously approved a universal human rights screen to end contracts and investments in companies involved in human rights abuses in January 2018, the local ADL and Jewish Federation exerted massive pressure on the councillors who then unanimously rescinded the resolution. Organizers nationwide are being blacklisted and demonized. Anti-BDS legislation is coming down the pipeline on the local, state, and federal levels.

An elected official who is a strong ally can provide information to you about the opposition's approaches and talking points. Palestine Legal and the Center for Constitutional Rights offer legal support and are [tracking the backlash](#) nationwide. Jewish Voice for Peace provides statements and other visible Jewish and rabbinical support when the label of anti-Semitism is misused to silence criticism of Israel. Find resources to fight anti-BDS legislation: [righttoboycott.org](http://righttoboycott.org).

While your base-building and visible advocacy is important, don't neglect behind-the-scenes relationship-building with public officials. Those relationships and having a broadly

supported coalition-led campaign are the best defenses against opposition. Many campaign coalitions have been faced with local government officials offering concessions to coalition members in an attempt to divide and conquer. Expect this, and make sure your coalition has a firm commitment to refusing the bait and sticking together through the tough times.

Prepare for backlash by talking to Palestine Legal, seasoned organizers, and campaigners in other cities. It is critical to have a media strategy to get your message out on your terms: the best defense is a good offense. Finally, document everything (email, video, pictures, screenshots of the who, where, when, and what happened) so you have evidence of malfeasance.

Most importantly, remember that these top-down, draconian attacks are coming precisely because Israel's supporters can no longer win the court of public opinion. These desperate measures are out of touch with public opinion and show precisely how powerful these campaigns have become. Keep the pressure on!

## **SUSTAINING YOUR CAMPAIGN**

Campaigns can take years. Celebrate the short- and mid-term goals you reach along the way. This is a great way to keep people motivated and bond with fellow campaigners. Celebrate each other. Do fun things together that aren't only about the campaign. Build and sustain your relationships and trust, especially for when things get rough, which they will. When there's a lull in your campaign, find a tactic to keep momentum such as a creative action, or placing a powerful piece in the media.

## **MEDIA**

Good media coverage is a result of hard work that includes reaching out to journalists, preparing materials and talking points, and having well-prepared spokespeople.

Look for good media opportunities including your campaign launch, major related world events, or inaccurate coverage that you can respond to. Meet with local papers' editorial boards to establish a positive relationship with your paper and to tell them about your campaign first-hand.

If coverage is inaccurate, email the reporter right away to request a clarification or correction. If they don't respond, email their editor. You can also follow up with a letter to the editor. You usually have 24-72 hours to make corrections. It is important to do this in a friendly, constructive, and educational manner. A good relationship with a reporter or editor will go a long way, and you can position yourself as a resource for them.

Try to get articles or op-eds published in the days leading up to the vote to gain support and influence elected officials.

If there's a good chance of winning, issue a media advisory ahead of the vote to notify media that it will be happening and invite them to attend.

Identify good media spokespeople with prepared talking points that they stick to. You can also distribute media kits to journalists containing concise background information on the campaign and other context.

Prepare a press release to go out immediately following the vote to get your framing out first. Have two ready to go: one in case of success and another in case of defeat. Consider holding a press conference after a winning vote.

For referrals to media experts, contact USCPR.

## **MESSAGING & TALKING POINTS**

From media interviews to social media to testimonies, your messages should be clear, consistent, positive, and accessible to everyone, regardless of their level of knowledge on the issue. Say what you are for, not just what you're against. Tell personal and compelling stories – stories are remembered 22 times more than statistics.

Have 2-3 key messages you want to hit on during every debate, interview, or event. Include the campaign action or ask. Brainstorm and practice responses to difficult questions and how to pivot back to your main message. Do not play the opposition's game: say what you are for, and stick to your talking points instead of being caught in the trap of responding and defending. For example, instead of saying "this is not anti-Semitic," explain what is true: "we support universal human rights and oppose oppression in all its forms."

## **WEBSITE, SOCIAL MEDIA, & SWAG**

A strong online presence is important to gain traction and followers for your campaign. Tap 1-2 people to create accounts on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram, and be sure to keep the accounts active with frequent content. Make a website with information and resources for people and media to learn more, also linking to a petition or sign-up of some sort. You can also collect pictures of local people holding signs in support of the campaign. Having a professional-looking, easily identifiable, and visually appealing logo can give your campaign more credibility and can make great T-shirts, buttons, etc. for visibility. If you anticipate a long campaign, T-shirts are a smart investment. A pithy campaign tagline helps too. Try finding someone in the coalition who has experience with graphic design, and prioritize a small budget for this – visual appeal is crucial!

## **PREPARING FOR THE HEARING**

Hearings are a beautiful opportunity for community members to come together and speak truth to power about the reality of Israeli and US state violence.

### **Find Out How the Hearing Process Works**

Are testimonies allowed? How can people sign up to testify? What is the time limit for each speaker, and for the whole hearing? Is there a speaker limit? Can speakers yield time to each other? Does the council use parliamentary process? Does passage require a simple or super majority? Are amendments allowed? Are there any other rules to know?

### Meet with Councilors Before the Vote

Do so to make sure they are still standing strong. If they are your “champions” – i.e. supportive enough that you feel comfortable strategizing with them – you can discuss:

- **Their advice on a successful hearing.** What have they seen work in the past? They are probably more familiar with what tone and presence would be most helpful.
- **What do they need from you?** Can you offer them talking points beforehand, responses to expected questions and arguments, and even support in the moment?
- **Contingency plans.** What happens if a win starts to slip away? What happens if one tiny thing is missing from or needs to be tweaked for the resolution to pass? Friendly amendments have been used in the past to strengthen a resolution so that it can pass. What contingencies can you plan for?

### Outreach for Turnout

A strong turnout is critical to showing officials just how much support lies behind a yes vote (and how many will be disappointed with a no vote). It's crucial to have a strong showing from movements beyond Palestine, especially if this is a campaign that impacts multiple struggles. Start outreach early and use every means you have – phone banking, text, email, Facebook events, in-person meetings, etc. – to turn people out, asking your partners to reach out to their own bases as well. Encourage a wide range of people to speak at the hearing, and offer talking points to people so they don't have to start from scratch.

### Preparing Testimonies

- What are the main points you want to make? Make a list of these and make sure you have someone covering each of them. It's okay to have some repetition between testimonies but you don't want to miss key points.
- Encourage speakers to plan their testimonies and practice them in the time limit.
- Here is a tried and true arc for a testimony:
  - Say your name and any identifiers (longtime city resident, organizational representative, business-owner, Palestinian, Jewish, etc.).
  - Tell a story that communicates the point you want to make (studies show stories are much more impactful than dry facts).
  - Connect it back directly to the resolution.
  - Make the ask (e.g. vote yes on this resolution).
- As with everything, center the voices of those most impacted by Israeli and US state violence. Don't replicate the same dynamics -- of whose voices and stories do and don't matter -- that we seek to dismantle in Palestine and the US.

Make sure to go over the media and messaging sections above for reminders on messaging, press releases (make sure you have two ready to go, one for success and another for defeat), and interviews.

### Having a Visible Presence

This is an important way to illustrate your power and raise your voices, even when you are not testifying.

- A vigil before the hearing can set a powerful tone, providing a compelling visual to city councillors entering the chambers, and grounding your group in the gravity of Israel's violence that calls you to work for Palestinian liberation. You can also consider a pre-vote rally or other action to drum up excitement and attract media.
- A great way to make a powerful visual to show the breadth and diversity of supporters is to give each supporter present a sign with a common refrain at the top

and space below to fill out the rest. In St. Louis, campaigners had signs that said “Dump Veolia because...” with attendees filling in the bottom. In New Orleans the signs read “I Support Human Rights because...” Attendees can hold signs up at strategic moments to have their voices heard by the decision-makers and the media present.

- Stoles and T-shirts, if worn by all your supporters, create an impactful visual showing your presence in every corner of the room. Buttons and stickers are good too, though they are usually too small to see from afar to project the same visual unity.
- Anticipate the different scenarios that could play out and what you will do. If the vote doesn't go the way you want, do you want to do any kind of coordinated direct action? Examples include standing up and turning your backs, walking out, breaking out in song, putting tape on your mouths, unfurling banners, mic checks, etc.
- Prepare a flyer to pass out to arriving attendees to let them know how to plug in, for example how to sign up to speak, what hashtags and handles to use on social media, where to go after the vote, etc.

### **Documentation and Online Engagement**

The world wants to follow this historic moment and you'll want to remember it!

- Pick a good hashtag and live tweet.
- Livestream, or at least record. Have a tripod handy if possible!
- Make sure you get at least a few great photos. These will be timeless and useful for media, other campaigns, and more. If nothing else, gather for a group photo afterward.

### **Pizza Party?**

Preparing for hearings is a lot of work and can also be a wonderfully energizing time for your group to come together. Consider gathering a couple days before the vote to make signs; coordinate, order, and practice your testimonies (timing yourselves and giving feedback), practice interviews, divvy up remaining tasks, and make sure everyone is on the same page with the plan. Have fun and congratulate yourselves for getting this far!

## **AFTER THE VOTE**

What's in a win? A win is about impact -- about moving our communities or leaders closer to a world that supports freedom, justice, and equality for Palestinians, and transforming institutions so they no longer undermine but rather support that vision. In other words, you can have wins without winning the vote! Some victories you should make sure to count are: shifting public opinion, building relationships with coalition partners, gaining influence with politicians and their staff, and producing media and educational tools that tell the story of justice in Palestine.

Whether or not the vote went your way, gather your supporters right after the vote to congratulate each other on everything the campaign has achieved, keeping morale high with important perspective on how your campaign fits in to a broader, long-term, global movement.

Winning or losing the vote sends you down two different paths, but both paths still head toward the same goals. Here's a road map for what to do after the vote.

## POSITIVE VOTE

### **Tell the Story of Your Victory and Reinforce It Against Backlash**

Work the media. Write a press release. Hold a press conference. Designate media spokespeople who have practiced talking points. Be sure that all coalition members are given credit, and intentionally amplify voices that aren't heard enough in the media.

Produce your own media: tell the story of your campaign. Reinforce your message and your victory: demonstrate popular support with a thank you petition, social media campaign, or call-in. In the face of backlash, stick to a message of what you believe in and what you achieved. Don't get derailed responding to groundless criticism.

### **Celebrate, Take Care, and Reflect**

Throw a victory party! Connect local wins to the larger global movement and movements in Palestine. Check in with organizers and partners about how the campaign went for them, what went well, and what needs to be changed or expanded in the future. Debrief together soon to reflect on what you learned, what worked, and what didn't. Write up lessons learned and advice to help other groups learn from what you've achieved.

### **Use the Win to Continue Building Local Power and Build That Power Upwards**

Pay attention to new communities or key influencers who are interested in your work. Bring those new people into your group or network. Use this win as the starting point for an advocacy strategy to get state or federal politicians listening, learning, and supporting Palestinian rights. Look for parallels between your campaign on Palestinian rights and US domestic and foreign policy, and pressure your legislators to take on the progressive policies you're building at the grassroots. Regroup and think about the next campaign and how you can keep the momentum going and have an even bigger impact.

## NEGATIVE VOTE

### **Reinforce A Narrative That Shows The Tide Turning Toward Justice**

Use tools like an immediate press release after the vote, self-produced documentary videos, a poster or ad campaign, or public event to get that narrative out there.

Depending on the situation, your narrative could reflect:

- Progressives stood up for Palestinian rights and energized a new generation of intersectional organizers.
- Right-wing institutional organizations squashed the rising tide of the progressive people's movement that stands for justice for everyone. Even so-called progressive Zionist organizations exposed their right-wing agendas.
- The people are on the right side of history, and it was politicians who chose the wrong side, at least for now.

### **Reflect**

Check in with organizers and partner organizations about how the campaign went for them, what went well and what needs to be changed or expanded in the future. Debrief together as soon as possible to reflect on what you learned, what worked and what didn't. Write up lessons learned and advice to help other groups learn from what you've achieved. Make sure to debrief again later, after you've had a chance to rest. The perspective will give you additional insights.

### **Rest and Take Care of Each Other**

While there's still a lot to do, we should never forget to prioritize loving and supporting each other.

### **Evaluate Windows of Opportunity and Re-Launch Your Campaign**

...or a different campaign. Note where you made progress and what openings you found. For instance, perhaps you succeeded in:



- Making Palestine a local issue, which means you're already changing hearts and minds, and just need a focused strategy to change votes.
- Centering Palestinian rights and collective action. Consider a more targeted campaign that uses media, lobbying, and public mobilizations to push politicians to adopt the new, human rights-first frame you've created.
- Building out a wide coalition, which might mean reconfiguring your campaign to work off of people power (referendum, visible actions to hold legislators accountable such as town hall mobilizations).
- Creating a wedge between PEPs (Progressive Except on Palestine) and genuinely progressive legislators. This means you've created a vital opening and can work to make the "PEP" phenomenon untenable in progressive spaces and support legislators who are standing for justice for all.