

Omar, Tlaib Compare Israel to Apartheid-Era South Africa

In the wake of Israel's decision to deny entry to Democratic congresswomen Ilhan Omar of Minnesota and Rashida Tlaib of Michigan, the lawmakers held a press conference in St. Paul to issue an official reaction.

At the event, Omar and Tlaib repeatedly accused Israel of maintaining an "occupation" of Palestinian land, referring to the Jewish state as "cruel" and "oppressive."

Based on an Israeli law on the books, the congresswomen were recently barred from entry over their support for anti-Israel boycotts and the boycott, divest and sanctions (BDS) movement, a Palestinian-led campaign that seeks to delegitimize the Jewish state and ultimately eliminate it.

Since 2012, Omar has faced accusations of anti-Semitism and has promoted anti-Israel positions, including invoking the dual-loyalty canard with regard to support for Israel. Tlaib, a Palestinian-American, advocates slashing aid to the Jewish state and creating one state to replace what is currently Israel.

During the press conference on Monday, Omar maintained that she planned to meet with members of the Knesset and Israeli "veterans," an apparent reference to the Breaking the Silence organization, a controversial left-wing, anti-IDF group.

Both lawmakers compared Israel to apartheid-era South Africa at several points during the Monday press conference, notwithstanding the fact the Israeli law protects the civil rights of all citizens, regardless of religion, ethnicity or race.

Omar also claimed that the U.S. should halt aid to Israel if

it doesn't stop the "expansion" of Jewish communities in Judea and Samaria.

Later in the event, Omar claimed she had the full support of Jewish leaders and constituents in her district, without elaborating further.

During her tear-filled address at the press conference, Tlaib recounted her experiences in Israel, which she claimed included "dehumanizing checkpoints."

Tlaib also addressed her decision to reject Israel's offer to permit her to visit her grandmother, who lives in Samaria.

According to Tlaib, her election to Congress "gave her [grandmother] dignity for the first time," implying that entering Israel to visit her without being able to promote the anti-Israel BDS movement would somehow rob her of that dignity.

Before the trip was cancelled, Tlaib and Omar listed "Palestine" as the destination of their visit to Israel, which was sponsored by a Palestinian group called Miftah. In the past, Miftah has promoted anti-Semitic content and expressed support for terrorism.

When questioned at the press conference about Miftah's past, Tlaib referred to red flags about the group as "distractions."

'Psychic Anguish'

Omar and Tlaib invited several other women to speak at the press conference, including Lana Barkawi, who serves as executive and artistic director of Mizna, which describes itself as an "organization devoted to promoting Arab-American culture."

After explaining that her father is from a town called Burka, which is located in Samaria about an hour from Jerusalem, Barkawi claimed she was "never able to visit" the village.

Several minutes later, Barkawi explained that in reality she had actually never tried to enter Israel to visit Burka.

According to Barkawi, such an attempt would create “too great a psychic anguish.”

Other women that addressed the press conference included a representative of the anti-Israel Jewish group IfNotNow and a Jewish U.S. citizen married to a Palestinian man, who recounted interrogations by the Israeli intelligence service when she entered Judea and Samaria with her spouse.

Prior to the press conference on Monday, White House spokesman Hogan Gidley commented, “Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar have a well-documented history of anti-Semitic comments, anti-Semitic social media posts and anti-Semitic relationships.”

“Israel has the right to prevent people who want to destroy it from entering the country—and Democrats’ pointless Congressional inquiries here in America cannot change the laws Israel has passed to protect itself,” he added.

Before Israel’s decision, Trump tweeted it would be a “show of weakness” to allow the two representatives in.

Last week, Israeli Interior Minister Aryeh Deri said Tlaib had requested and been granted permission to enter Israel to see her grandmother. Deri’s office released a letter that it said was from Tlaib, which promised to respect travel restrictions during her visit. But after the announcement, Tlaib announced she was rejecting Israel’s offer. {eo}

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