

Palestinian Rights Organization Challenges Meritless Lawsuit Filed Against It

Attorneys Say Case Is Part of Broader Assault on Human Rights Defenders

By [Center for Constitutional Rights](#)

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Last night, the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR) moved to dismiss a meritless lawsuit filed against it by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and several individuals. Human rights attorneys say the lawsuit targets USCPR's support of Palestinian rights and is intended to chill them from engaging in constitutionally protected advocacy.

“The fact that we’re under attack is no surprise: human rights defenders around the world are under attack from repressive regimes and their allies. This lawsuit is part of this global, right-wing assault on civil society and movements seeking to build a better future for all,” said Ramah Kudaimi, US Campaign for Palestinian Rights Deputy Director. “We will not be intimidated, and our work dedicated to the rights of the Palestinian people—work that is grounded in the principles of equal rights, justice, and freedom for all—will continue.”

Attorneys say the lawsuit makes outlandish claims, casting collective activism and expressions of solidarity as unlawful. Plaintiffs base their far-fetched accusations of conspiracy and material support for terrorism on USCPR’s support for Palestinian rights, including for boycotts, divestment, and sanctions against Israel until it complies with international law. Their claims also rely on USCPR’s criticism of Israel’s unlawful use of force against Palestinian demonstrators in Gaza who are demanding their internationally recognized right of return to their homes, as well as its participation in the Stop the JNF Campaign aimed at exposing and challenging the JNF’s role in dispossessing Palestinians of their land.

In arguing for dismissal of JNF’s lawsuit against USCPR, attorneys emphasized the threat to free speech and association if a group of activists can be sued on such tenuous theories of liability.

“Anyone who cares about civil liberties and human rights should be deeply concerned by the frivolous and malicious lobbing of accusations of conspiracy and terrorism at a human rights organization,” said [Diala Shamas](#), a staff attorney at the Center for Constitutional Rights. “This case is part of a broader and well-resourced effort to attack advocates for Palestinian rights—whether through anti-boycott legislation, university administrations silencing student activists, or meritless lawsuits filed against supporters of Palestinian human rights. We will continue to support movements as they advocate for rights and

dignity.”

The JNF, or Keren Kayemeth Lelsrael, is a quasi-state institution in Israel that acquires and administers land for the sole benefit of Jewish people. The JNF has been instrumental in the Israeli state’s dispossession of the Palestinian people. While the JNF has been the target of lawsuits for its discriminatory policies, this is the first time it has tried to use US courts to silence critics.

Lawyers say the lawsuit is part of a broad and growing pattern of suppressing activism in support of Palestinian rights, a phenomenon that the Center for Constitutional Rights and Palestine Legal have documented and called the “[Palestine Exception](#)” to free speech. The organizations report the widespread use of administrative disciplinary actions, harassment, firings, legislative attacks, false accusations of terrorism and antisemitism, and baseless legal complaints. Palestine Legal has responded to 1,494 incidents of suppression targeting speech supportive of Palestinian rights between 2014 and 2019. See [2019 Year in Review](#).

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