

U.S. lawyers' trip to Israel/Palestine; whitewashing Israeli Apartheid and occupation

When Kairos Palestine learned about the Catholic Lawyers Guild of Chicago's educational trip to Israel/Palestine (March 30-April 5, 2019), Kairos Palestine wrote a closed letter to the association and co-sponsors of the trip, the Chicago Bar Association and the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois.

The letter urged the guild to cancel or alter its program. Many aspects of the itinerary contributed to whitewashing the State of Israel's laws, policies and practices that keep Palestinians under military occupation and harsh oppression, giving implicit approval to Israel's violations of human rights and international law.

For examples: the itinerary described towns and historic and recreational sites in the Occupied Palestinian Territories as being in Israel; participants were promised "exclusive access to all three branches of Israeli government" without any opportunities to meet with Palestinian and Israeli human rights attorneys and organizations; an offer to "Experience Ancient Jerusalem like never before on a guided, 2-hour Segway tour" was extended in spite of Israel's denial of millions of Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza access to Jerusalem and to Palestinians' most holy sites.

The Catholic Lawyers Guild and the Hispanic Lawyers Association of Illinois did not respond to the letter. The Chicago Bar Association's response was shallow at best. In the end, the associations failed to amend the itinerary. On its website, the Chicago Bar Association describes itself as "apolitical." But it is not apolitical when an itinerary locates Palestinian towns and sites as being in Israel, and participants meet only with officials on one side of the conflict.

Kairos Palestine condemns such trips, because they coverup injustice, are indifferent to the human hope for peace and justice and fail to contribute to the end of Israel's occupation and oppressions when Palestinians and Israelis can live in peace as neighbors.

Kairos Palestine
April 5, 2019