



US Campaign for
Palestinian Rights

A GUIDE TO TAKING OUR PEOPLE POWER TO CONGRESS

Moving Congress towards freedom, justice, and
equality for the Palestinian people



THIS IS OUR MOMENT

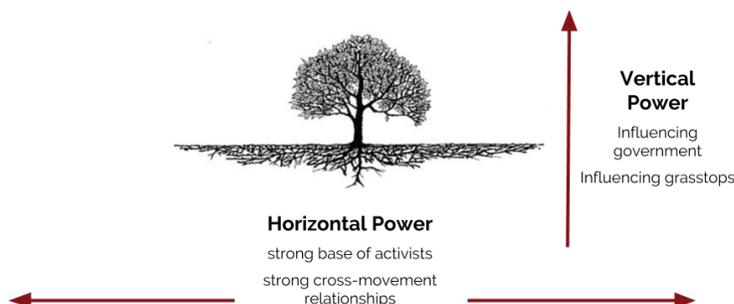
Translating Grassroots Strength into Progress Towards Justice

In the face of ongoing oppression in the US and Palestine, the situation is urgent and people of conscience are moving to action. Right now, the response from our policymakers is to be largely complicit in Israeli oppression and the perpetuation of the separate-and-unequal apartheid status quo. **It's on us, as people of conscience, to generate long-term momentum for campaigns whose discourse and goals fundamentally disrupt the status quo and push towards freedom, justice, and equality.**

At the US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR), we ground our approach to building power for justice in the strategic wisdom and deep ethic of building a united, cross-community progressive front against oppression. To echo wisdom from writer and leading movement strategist Adrienne Maree Brown, like the oak trees in New Orleans that survived the hurricane, **movements that grow upwards to reach the highest levels of power are able to weather the storm by relying on their deep roots, intertwined with the strong grassroots of other struggles.**

Rooting our work in grassroots organizing and building strategic grassroots advocacy starts with you! In that spirit, we offer this guide.

Building Power to Build a Freer Future



GETTING OUR MESSAGE ACROSS

Speaking Truth to Power in the 116th Congress

STRATEGIC ASKS & EFFECTIVE MESSAGING

Our demands are for freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people. These are based on [USCPR's principles](#) and echo those of [Palestinian civil society](#). **We believe in no privilege, no subjugation, no exceptions—and we are bringing that message to Capitol Hill.**

We are pushing to move Congress from complicity in Israeli abuses to holding Israel accountable. We are pushing to move the status quo, a political framework that normalizes dispossession, towards a rights-based framework that demands justice for all.

Palestinian rights are a natural part of progressive politics. We especially hold progressive politicians who share our values accountable to putting those values into action, and **not** make an exception for Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people. Our asks for Congress reflect progressive values, and **the messaging we use to deliver them uses a people power-fueled, values-first strategy.**

Palestine
is a
Progressive
Issue

KEY ASKS FOR THE 116TH CONGRESS

Supporting Palestinian rights is an inextricable part of the progressive policy agenda. Supporting the Israeli government's ongoing denial of Palestinian rights through separate-and-unequal apartheid policies and military occupation is an inextricable part of the conservative agenda.

WE SUPPORT ADVANCING FREEDOM, JUSTICE, AND EQUALITY THROUGH ACCOUNTABILITY MECHANISMS AND A RIGHTS-BASED, PROGRESSIVE APPROACH TO PALESTINE/ISRAEL.

- **USCPR urges representatives to support bills that will protect Palestinian human rights** by ensuring military aid to Israel cannot be used to commit human rights abuses, including cosponsoring Rep. Betty McCollum's bill to prohibit US funding of Israeli military detention of Palestinian children.
- **USCPR urges representatives to support legislation and “Dear Colleague” letters that uphold the principle of equality for all**, to oppose Israel's discriminatory “Nation-State” Law, and to protect Palestinian villages on both sides of the Green Line, like Umm Al-Hiran, Khan al Ahmar, and Susiya from Israeli demolition.
- **USCPR urges representatives to support the constitutional right to boycott** by opposing legislation that penalizes and/or criminalizes boycotts for Palestinian rights.

WE OPPOSE SEPARATE-AND-UNEQUAL POLICIES AND MILITARY OCCUPATION THAT REPRESENT A RIGHT-WING VISION FOR MAINTAINING ENTRENCHED RACISM IN OUR WORLD.

- **USCPR urges representatives to oppose any Trump administration plan for peace that denies the Palestinian people full freedom, justice, and equality.**
- **USCPR urges representatives to publicly or privately refuse to attend the AIPAC conference, CoDel**, and exercise great caution when reviewing AIPAC's legislative asks. USCPR instead urges representatives to join Rep. Rashida Tlaib's planned alternative CoDel.

- **USCPR urges representatives to oppose the Israeli closure of the occupied Gaza Strip**, which denies Palestinians their right to freedom of movement, access an education, and more, and involves violent force from routine Israeli bombings to live fire at protesters, farmers, fishers, medics, journalists, and others.

KEY RESOURCES FOR THE 116TH CONGRESS

In addition to articulating these asks for Congress, bring printed copies of the resources below with you to your meetings. Leaving a copy is a professional way to leave your ask:

- [Memo to Members of the 116th Congress on Israeli-Palestinian Issues](#)
- [FAQs on Israeli-Palestinian Issues and US Policy](#)
- [One-pagers for Congress by issue](#)

OVERARCHING MESSAGING POINTERS

Want to strategically message to Congress like a pro? Below are some tips tailored to messaging to policymakers.

- **Start with a thank you to build credibility and common ground.** Starting from a place of gratitude (even if it's more forced than genuine) and shared values will make policymakers much more likely to respond well to your ask.
- **Make it local and personal.** Speak from the 'I' about why ending US complicity in Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people and promoting rights is important to you. Storytelling backed by a strong argument, not a flurry of statistics, is what makes for a game changing question to a policymaker. Consider referencing [the tax dollars from your community that go to weapons to Israel](#) and explain how that money could instead be invested in justice by funding community needs. Learn more about [public narrative framework](#) and how a telling your story can catalyze social change.
- **Make connections to familiar or understandable issues.** Many people believe that Palestinian human rights are part of a complex conflict that is too hard to understand. Defining and contextualizing the words and phrases we use and issues at stake can make the issue more accessible and bring in supporters.

- **Keep it positive for successful messaging and foolproof questions.** We can pivot the conversation to Palestinian rights by asking Congress to affirm (or otherwise directly oppose) Palestinian rights rather than condemn Israeli actions. The latter makes space for the same old myths framed around Israeli security to dominate, whereas the former pushes the conversation into rights-based frameworks and exposing politicians if they won't extend their values to the rights of the Palestinian people. This is how we succeed in forcing steps towards justice.
- **Cement support for Palestinian rights as a progressive issue.** Messaging across movements starts by building real cross-movement relationships (see Basebuilding tips in section 3A). Embedding Palestinian rights as a progressive issue necessitates speaking out for issues like immigration justice, racial justice, Indigenous justice, and gender justice while working alongside leaders on those issues in your community. Articulate a genuine commitment to challenge connected oppressions and describe a vision of liberation that includes everyone, including the Palestinian people and marginalized peoples in your community.

PIVOT YOUR LANGUAGE GROW OUR POWER

Pivoting to more effective language can strengthen our advocacy. Here's some language shifts we recommend, adapted from an excellent resource: [The Heart of It: Messaging for the Palestinian Freedom Movement](#), a messaging guidebook created by Palestine media experts.

COMMON LANGUAGE	WHAT'S INEFFECTIVE OR INACCURATE ABOUT IT?	MORE EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TO USE
Pro-Palestine/pro-Israel	Frames it as a political game with teams to be chosen, rather than a question of justice versus injustice	Remember to frame it as a rights issue : "supporters/opponents of Palestinian rights" is more effective



COMMON LANGUAGE	WHAT'S INEFFECTIVE OR INACCURATE ABOUT IT?	MORE EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TO USE
Israeli-Palestinian conflict	This suggests that both sides have equal power	Frame it as Israeli oppression of Palestinians
IDF, security forces	Words like "defense" (the "D" in IDF) and "security" legitimize the violence levied against Palestinians	"Israeli military," "Israeli occupation forces," "Israeli soldiers"
Administrative detention	This term is overly technical and dehumanizing in regards to the real people affected	Explain that this is indefinite detention without charges or a fair trial, and often on secret evidence
Arab minority, Arab-Israelis	This detracts from the Palestinian identity of non-Jewish citizens of Israel	"Palestinian citizens of Israel"
Occupation	The word "occupation" has a different connotation in America, and people generally don't associate it with violence or imperialism	Adding "military" before the word "occupation" can clarify and paint a mental picture for your audience



COMMON LANGUAGE	WHAT'S INEFFECTIVE OR INACCURATE ABOUT IT?	MORE EFFECTIVE LANGUAGE TO USE
Apartheid	Many people either don't fully understand the word or associate it only with South Africa, or both	Pair "separate-and-unequal" with "apartheid" to help define it. Define apartheid or explain how it plays out in real-world terms
Settler-colonialism	This term is overly academic for use with an everyday audience	Articulate how settler-colonialism plays out in real-world terms
BDS	Many people don't know what BDS means, even if you said each word individually	Describe boycott, divestment, and sanctions as tactics in freedom struggles
Boycott Israel	This does not explain how or why people are boycotting	Explain what specifically is being boycotted
Anti-BDS legislation	If people don't know what BDS is, they won't get the significance of this term	Frame it exactly as it is— "anti-free speech legislation"



COHERENT CALLS FOR JUSTICE: SUPPORT INTERCONNECTED FREEDOM STRUGGLES FROM THE US TO PALESTINE

The strongest messaging in the world of policy looks just like the strongest messaging in the grassroots: messages that reference our values and connect struggles for justice, from the US to Palestine. Check out some examples of powerful messages that connect struggles, and consider ways to show up for justice from the US to Palestine in your advocacy. For more, check out our curriculum *Together We Rise: Palestine as a Model of Resistance*.



“The US gives Israel \$10 million a day to put people like my cousin in prison for the crime of being Palestinian. I stand before you to urge you to pressure Israel...to end arbitrary arrests and searches of Palestinians without warrants, charges, or trial.”

Member of Memphis Voices for Palestine
Rep. Steve Cohen’s (D-TN) August 5 Town Hall



Photo: No Way to Treat a Child
Defence for Children International - Palestine

“

Around the globe, we see the effects of [the] **intersection between militarism and racism.**

We can see it in the **\$3.8 billion of our tax money** that the US sends...to enable the **Israeli military** to continue its violations against Palestinian rights...

But money can never be the basis for **ignoring the lives of Palestinian children and ignoring the rights of the Palestinian people.**

”

REV. DR. WILLIAM J. BARBER II



From the US-Mexico border to Palestine, the US and Israel are separating kids from their families and imprisoning them.

There’s no excuse for taking children from their families and putting them in cages.



HELP! MY MEMBER OF CONGRESS DOESN'T SHARE MY VALUES: STRATEGIES & MORE OPTIONS FOR ORGANIZING

It's a common quandary. Many progressive movement organizers doing incredible justice work are represented by members of Congress who don't share our values of [anti-racism](#), [freedom](#), [justice](#), [equality](#), and [gender justice](#).

That doesn't mean we should abandon core values of freedom, justice, and equality in our work and form more cynical alliances. To the contrary, in the same way that [a relentless commitment](#) by Mijente and others to building from the left to transform immigration politics birthed [#AbolishICE](#), it's a commitment to building on the history of left solidarity, and [particularly Black solidarity](#), with Palestine that has elevated Palestine such that famous writers like [Michelle Alexander](#) are declaring Palestine a progressive issue in the pages of the *New York Times*. It's vital to our strategy to advance, not undermine, the inevitable embedding of Palestinian rights into the progressive agenda.

So, in the case that your member of Congress doesn't share your values, we recommend two approaches:

- **Consider your secondary targets and goals.** You can achieve great success with secondary targets or goals even without a victory on your primary goal of getting a difficult member of Congress to support Palestinian rights. For instance, if your member of Congress won't sign onto Rep. Betty McCollum's bill to end US support for Israeli detention of Palestinian children, you can build new alliances with progressive organizations that sign onto a local campaign around the bill that is racial justice oriented. Or, seemingly unsuccessful pressure on your Republican member of Congress on the right to boycott could be used as a wedge issue to then pressure your Democratic senator to take a strong public stance in support of our right to boycott for Palestinian rights.
- **Start organizing on the municipal or state level first.** If your member of Congress isn't a promising target and there aren't compelling secondary targets, consider other levels of government at which your organizing could be effective. Is your local government more progressive? Consider a municipal campaign. Check out our trove of resources at [Cities for Palestine](#) and consider possible campaign targets with the [Palestine is Here](#) map.

Also consider state-level work for the right to boycott. See the status of unconstitutional, anti-free speech legislation in your state at RightToBoycott.org and use these incredible resources to power your campaign: [Organizing Against Anti-BDS Legislation at the State Level](#) (by JVP-Boston, Massachusetts Peace Action, and Alliance for Water Justice in Palestine) and [Anti-Boycott Bills Toolkit for Activists](#) (by Defending Rights and Dissent). Once you've organized more locally, you can use the local political shift you've orchestrated to put much stronger pressure on your member of Congress to change course.



MOVING CONGRESS

How People Power Can Get Our Elected Officials to Represent Us

YOU ALREADY KNOW HOW TO BUILD POWER

Good news! As an organizer, you're already equipped with most of the skills you need to take your people power to Congress.

What you know as an organizer translates: if you've taken on boycott campaigns, you know how to target corporations and appeal to everyday consumers. If you've taken on divestment campaigns, you know how to target institutions and appeal to your fellow members. If you've educated and raised awareness, you know how to appeal to the general public. Putting the pressure on Congress requires some knowledge of how this particular world works, but with this guide in hand, you'll be taking your people power and organizing skills to Congress in no time.

UNDERSTANDING THE SOCIAL JUSTICE ECOSYSTEM

Consider that social justice takes place in an ecosystem, with three simple parts that interplay to create policy change:

- **Activists:** Escalate to create public tension. Imagine them banging on the door to get in or be heard.
- **Advocates:** Maneuver to create private pressure. Imagine them sitting on one side of the desk making demands of elected officials.
- **Elected officials:** Make political and moral calculations based on this pressure and ultimately hold the power to dictate policy. Imagine them sitting on the other side of the desk, listening to the advocates and aware of the activists.

These three actors can undermine each other or strengthen each other's work. It takes strategizing and building relationships to shift the political calculations of elected officials so they will change policy and recognize that the only tenable path is the path to justice.

At first glance, grassroots advocacy might sound like it only fits the "advocate" role. But USCPR, our partners, and the grassroots (you!) actually take on both activist and advocate tactics in order to move power. A strong, intentional interplay between these roles is what can move members of Congress to action.

At the same time, we need to be building power in two directions to win: horizontally and vertically. By building numbers and building across movements, we build "horizontal power." By building influence on elected officials and the people who influence them, we build "vertical power."

These combined tactics mean people power can succeed in taking steps towards an end to US complicity in Israeli oppression and the beginning of support for freedom, justice, and equality for the Palestinian people.

We've laid these groups of tactics out below. In short, A. basebuilding and coalition building equips you for B. showing your numbers to Congress, which builds your legitimacy and power to make C. direct lobbying asks, which then lays out the demands on which you can escalate at D. town halls and actions.



AVENUES FOR ACTION

Tactics to Grow Influence with Congress

Below are tips and starter resources for every tactic outlined in this guide. We recommend planning several months ahead, and moving through phases beginning with basebuilding, then showing your numbers, then lobbying your member of Congress to make the direct ask, and lastly escalating through town halls or other ways of putting your people power to work directly reaching your member of Congress.

A. BUILDING YOUR BASE & COALITION (ACTIVISM/HORIZONTAL POWER)

- **Build relationships with possible partners or coalition members.** Solidarity starts with showing up! Building relationships with partners is a necessary precursor to being able to walk into a member of Congress's office with a powerful coalition that can demand support for Palestinian rights and be listened to. Start by consistently showing up for other social justice movements. From there, you can start the conversation about how you can work together to shift your member of Congress's stances towards justice. Start brainstorming groups to reach out to with the matrix below, and get ready to do outreach by [reading up on group building in an anti-oppression framework \(pg. 8\)](#). The takeaway: center Palestinian leadership. Center other marginalized voices. Center youth.



- **Build out a diverse coalition with shared values and activate it effectively.** Once you have genuine relationships, you can start building a coalition for grassroots Palestine advocacy. A co-signed organizational letter in support of legislation (i.e. Rep. McCollum's bill to end US support for Israeli detention of Palestinian children) can be one starting point, or form a formal coalition focused on continuing Palestine advocacy, like the [Virginia Coalition for Human Rights](#). Once you've started building an initial relationship, set up a meeting with leadership or host an educational presentation with the membership of possible partner groups. To explore what your coalition should look like, consider three primary groups—that often overlap—and that are likely to share our [values of anti-racism, freedom, justice, equality, and gender justice](#):

1. Communities of color
2. Progressives
3. Human and civil rights advocates

As you brainstorm specific groups, consider:

- a. **USCPR member groups** in your area
 - b. **Chapter-based organizations that support or could support Palestinian rights** like American Muslims for Palestine, Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP), Council on American-Islamic Relations, Black Youth Project 100, Black Lives Matter, Indivisible, American Friends Service Committee (AFSC), Democratic Socialists of America
 - c. **Student groups** like Students for Justice in Palestine, JVP chapters, Muslim Student Associations, Black Student Unions, and others
 - d. **Progressive movement groups** that could support Palestinian rights as an issue of racial justice, gender justice, queer liberation, refugee rights, indigenous liberation, or another anti-oppression lens
 - e. **Progressive faith communities** like your local mosques, synagogues, churches, temples, and other places of worship
- Recruit individuals to build a larger base. The bigger your base, the more people your member of Congress has to reckon with as they consider their stance on Palestinian rights. Your greatest resources as you build your base are your partners and coalition members. Work with them to reach their respective bases and recruit new people through petitioning at allies' events, canvassing in public places, or inviting people in your broader networks to take action (see the Show Your Numbers section below) and following up to

incorporate them into your group. Check out these [basebuilding tips](#) from Black Lives Matter activist Greg Akili to start designing your basebuilding strategy, and [contact USCPR](#) for support.

B. SHOWING YOUR NUMBERS (Advocacy/Horizontal Power)

In spite of clear evidence that a rising majority of people who are young, women, or people of color support Palestinian rights, Congress hardly hears from us. By demonstrating our numbers to Congress through grassroots advocacy channels, we can make sure our voices are heard and change Congress's calculations on the issue. From emails, to calls, to social media and more, members of Congress base their calculations in part on what will make them popular with the masses who can re-elect them. Use these grassroots advocacy tactics to show your people power:

- **Organize email actions.** Congressional staff have tools to count every email, so the [email actions you take on our campaigns pages](#) really do make a difference. You can also set up your own email-ins with suggested language and a link to your member of Congress's contact page, which you can find on [ContactingCongress.org](#). A note on timing: it takes offices up to 2-3 weeks to process and count emails, so if it's an urgent matter, organize a call-in instead!
- **Organize call-ins.** When the phone rings off the hook, Congress notices! Calls are counted each day and typically, reported weekly. It is best to call the DC office (find the number on [ContactingCongress.org](#)). USCPR often organizes call-ins that you can spread to your local organizers, like the [call-in](#) in support of Rep. Ilhan Omar.
- **Flood social media.** Communications directors for members of Congress notice when their member of Congress is mentioned repeatedly on social media. [ContactingCongress.org](#) can direct you to their Twitter and Facebook pages. You can use USCPR social media ([Facebook](#), [Twitter](#), and [Instagram](#)) as guidance on when your group could circulate calls to take action on social media.
- **Write letters to the editor or op-eds.** Communications staff for members of Congress monitor all mentions of their member of Congress in the press, no matter how local the paper. Direct your group or networks to write timely letters to the editor, mentioning the member of Congress by name and calling on them to take

action. For more, check out guides by the [Friends Committee on National Legislation \(FCNL\)](#) and [JVP](#).

- Bring physical letters, postcards, or petitions to lobby visits. Even in the digital age, you can show your numbers on paper. Once you have constituents (and it's vital that they be constituents—that is, represented by the member of Congress) write or sign individual letters, postcards, or petitions, be sure to deliver them to the office of your member of Congress, either as part of a lobby visit or a staged delivery. It's slightly more ideal to have a stack of letters or postcards than a petition, but either works. The more personalized the message, the better, but in the end it's a numbers game, so bringing form letters signed by different constituents works as well. [Contact USCPR](#) if you're looking for postcards or petitions for a particular legislative advocacy campaign.

C. DIRECT LOBBYING (ADVOCACY/VERTICAL POWER)

To lobby is to make a demand of policymakers, and lobbying directly simply means meeting them at their offices to deliver your asks in a meeting. Whether your asks are met immediately—the best case scenario—or it takes years of activism and advocacy to move your member of Congress to support Palestinian rights, lobbying is a necessary step to make your voice heard and move Congress towards justice for Palestinians. There are a few options to make your asks directly to your member of Congress:



- **Schedule lobby visits with staff.** Whether you're in your congressional district at home or making a visit to Washington, DC, congressional staff have an obligation to meet with you. Assemble a group of constituents, ideally from different groups that you've built connections with from your work on building your base and coalition. Decide on strategic asks (See: Our Key Asks for the 116th Congress) and check out our bills we're following tool on our [Grassroots Advocacy Toolkit](#). Find contact info for the right staff member on the "staff" tab of their legislator page, which you can find by clicking your member of

Congress's name in the [Congress Directory](#). If you're meeting in-district, write to the district director. If you're meeting in Washington, DC, write to the legislative assistant(s) or the legislative director. As you plan your lobby visit, use [USCPR's lobbying Congress tips](#). If you have trouble scheduling a meeting, use the [comprehensive guide from FCNL](#) and [contact USCPR](#). After, keep building the relationship with the staff member by sending informal updates from your group, formal asks, and inviting them to educational events by your organizers, USCPR, or our partners.

- **Schedule lobby visits with the member of Congress.** Persistence pays off as you try to meet with your member of Congress. Rather than contacting legislative staff, you should email the scheduler to request a meeting with the member of Congress. Look up their contact info on the "staff" tab of their legislator page, which you can reach by clicking your member of Congress's name in the [Congress Directory](#). Be sure to check the [congressional calendar](#) as you consider your scheduling request. In general, members of Congress are on Capitol Hill when Congress is in session and in their districts when Congress is not in session. When it is in session, members of Congress are in district Friday afternoon to Monday morning and on Capitol Hill Monday evening to Thursday night. As with a staff-level visit, be sure to assemble a group of constituents, and follow the same [tips](#) and approaches.
- **Attend public events and buttonhole them.** Persistence works! Show up consistently at your member of Congress's public events and take every opportunity to ask them in person to support Palestinian rights. [AFSC's guide](#) has more information on this tried and true advocacy tactic
- **Invite congressional staff to your events.** Knowledge is power. After you've built a relationship through meetings and regular updates, use your educational and organizing work to move your member of Congress by inviting staff to attend your events.

D. MOBILIZING AT TOWN HALLS & ACTIONS (ACTIVISM/ HORIZONTAL POWER)

Take the energy often put into protests and other in-person mobilizations to Congress! Choose strategic asks (see: Our Key Asks for the 116th Congress) and find a strategic opening.

Town halls work for any case, events are great for our congressional champions of Palestinian rights, and actions can be a step to consider when a member of Congress has shown clear, consistent opposition to Palestinian rights and won't budge.

While the bulk of our recommendations in the section that follows are specific to town halls, which represent a massive opportunity to speak truth to power on the regular, you can apply most of the same tips to actions and events.

- **Mobilize at town halls to speak truth to power.** Town halls present our clearest opportunity for the grassroots to make Palestinian rights an issue in Congress. Track these town hall opportunities with [Town Hall Project](#). From the [powerfully worded questions](#) that got Sen. Kirsten Gillibrand to drop the Israel Anti-Boycott Act to the [raucous public opposition](#) activists organized at Sen. Ben Cardin's town hall opposing the bill, town halls shift the narrative on work for Palestinian rights. In the following sections, we offer a trove of resources for everyday activists like yourself to mobilize your networks for a town hall like a pro.
- **Protest at public events, if the time is right.** If your member of Congress has made clear that they're opposed to our cause, escalating to action can work to shift public opinion, capture media attention, and demonstrate the power of the movement for Palestinian rights. This can ultimately move opponents and bring us more allies. As an example, as Palestinians participating in the Great Return March were being massacred by Israeli snipers in the Gaza Strip, [JVP organized a protest](#) mourning Palestinian lives lost and calling on Sen. Chuck Schumer, typically a staunch opponent of Palestinian rights, to condemn the killings. New to these kinds of actions? Check out [JVP's Ready to Fight series](#) for an intro.
- **Host events featuring the member of Congress, if they champion the cause.** When members of Congress speak out for freedom, justice, and equality, we can amplify that call by celebrating their remarks and lifting up their voices. If your member of Congress is willing to publicly speak out for what's right, consider approaching them to host an event on Palestinian rights that includes, or centers on, inviting the members of Congress or their staff. As a few examples, [see Rep. Betty McCollum](#) at the 2018 USCPR national conference,



Rep. Luis Gutierrez at a Chicago rally for Rep. McCollum's child detention bill hosted by JVP-Chicago, AMP, and AFSC, and Rep. Andre Carson's staff at the AFSC's Indiana "Hearing in the Heartland."

A POWERFUL MOBILIZING TACTIC: TIPS FOR MOBILIZING AT TOWN HALLS

Thank you to JVP, Indivisible, and AFSC for their indispensable guides, tips, and leading by example, which led USCPR to these tips. For more or to bring these tips to an organizing meeting, [contact USCPR](#).

- **Record, record, record on your cell phone, and hold it sideways!** A goal of these town halls is to get your MoC on the record about Palestinian rights. That means any questions and responses on Palestine must be videotaped. Assign one person to [video record on their cell phone](#)—and [hold it sideways!](#) After, send us the video ASAP!
- **Have a mobilization plan ready.** We'll tap you as soon as a town hall in your district pops up, but this can happen as late as a couple days in advance, so having a list ready of people to contact is helpful.
- **Question preparation is key.** Come ready with a clear idea of how you plan to frame your ask. See our messaging for more detailed information on this.
- **Be vulnerable and personal.** Use "I" statements and draw on your experiences. Framing Palestinian rights as an issue that directly affects your MoC's constituency will make them more likely to consider your ask. It'll also make the audience more supportive and sympathetic.
- **Know your MoC's record on Palestinian issues** and incorporate that into your ask. Check out our [directory](#) to see your MoC's past actions on this issue.
- **Spread out and talk to other constituents before the town hall begins.** This is a key time to introduce and familiarize the issue to other residents and hopefully garner constituent, as well as congressional, support.

- **Decide on roles beforehand.** Who are the question askers, video recorders, sign holders, etc.
- **Engage with reporters.** Other than making yourself available for any sort of questions, having a list of talking points to hand out makes their lives easier and, more importantly, makes our narrative more likely to end up in media coverage that may emerge from the town hall. [Use this toolkit](#) and [contact US CPR](#) for support.
- **Bring visuals.** Signs and t-shirts are effective ways to attract the attention of the press and show your MoC that their constituents care about the issue. We are happy to send these to you for free (contact us!). Also see our [printable signs folder](#).
- **Interact with the staff.** While everyone is scrambling to talk to the MoC afterwards, strike up a conversation with the staffer and try to get a business card. Staff members are powerful connections to have, and you can follow up for a meeting.
- **Find a “handshake opportunity.”** Be prepared to ask a 30-second question or make a 30-second statement while shaking your MoC's hand after the town hall has ended. Be firm, direct, and polite.
- **Follow up afterwards.** Write to the foreign policy or local district staffer you met. You can also contact us if you'd like us to connect you to the right staff member. Offer some positive feedback about the town hall and attach further resources about your ask.

YOUR TOWN HALL MOBILIZATION TO-DO LIST

So, you're organizing for a town hall and you're reading our tips: read on for a list of potential tasks to increase your chances of a successful and powerful showing! Heading to a meeting with your fellow organizers to plan for an in-person mobilization? You can print [this checklist](#) to bring along.

BEFORE

- Gather a group of people in-district who have agreed to help you organize around town halls

- Reach out to them when a town hall arises
- Conduct outreach outside of your core circle to get other supporters to show up to the town hall
- Decide on roles. Who will be the:
 - Photographer
 - Videographer
 - Question asker(s)
 - Sign holders
 - Media point person
 - Follow-up email sender
- Research your member of Congress's record on Palestine and other issues
- Decide on key messaging, based on your research, and prepare questions in accordance with that
- Request visuals such as signs and stickers from USCPR
- Call your member of Congress's in-district office to see what kind of format will be used to ask questions during the town hall and plan accordingly

DURING

- Bring visuals and stickers to hand out
- Interact with the audience before the event begins, informing them why you're there and why Palestinian rights are important to you
- Spread out in the audience
- Clap whenever one of your supporters speaks
- Record with your phone sideways, like a TV screen
- Try to shake your MoC's hand after and give a 30-second pitch on your ask

AFTER

- Send a follow-up email
- Try to schedule a one-on-one with your MoC, if not a staff-level meeting
- Share your notes, pictures, videos, etc. with USCPR
- Consider coordinating a call-in or email-in as needed

AFTER THE TOWN HALL

- **Share with USCPR** your notes, pictures, videos, etc. from the town hall so we can transcribe the video and use their comments for strategy and social media pushes!
- **Follow-up** with your member of Congress's office, thanking them for hearing your questions(s) and forwarding any resources that are relevant to your asks.
- **Try to schedule a 1:1 meeting** with your member of Congress to discuss more personally what was discussed. If they aren't supportive: consider pushing the asks further. If they are supportive: ask how you can support them. See the Direct Lobbying section and [this guide from FCNL](#) for more information.
- **Publish a letter to the editor** to personalize the issue and get your member of Congress's attention. See [FCNL's guide](#) for helpful tips.
- **Don't underestimate people power!** Numbers matter to your MoC, so the more people you can get to call or email about a certain topic, the better (see: 3B Show Your Numbers for organizing ideas).
- **Bird dog!** Show up consistently at every public event and taking every opportunity to ask your members of Congress in person to support Palestinian rights. [AFSC's guide](#) has more information on this tried and true advocacy tactic.

