

## Statement to Congress

Below is an excellent statement provided to Congress on behalf of Palestinian American citizens in the town of Birzeit whose land has been taken over by Israeli settlers. The statement reflects concerns of all Americans who have been harmed by settler violence and raises important questions about the basic rights of US citizens.

“We own property in a Palestinian town called Birzeit in the West Bank which has recently been threatened by a new illegal Israeli settler outpost. American citizens are facing an alarming situation: the discriminatory seizure of their land in the West Bank by Israeli settlers, enabled by foreign laws that target certain groups and in some cases are facilitated by American citizens and American-funded organizations.

At its core, this is not just a dispute about land. It is about whether the United States will stand behind the rights of its own citizens when those rights are stripped away through discriminatory legal systems overseas.

One of the foundational principles of the United States is that property cannot be taken arbitrarily or discriminatorily without due process. That principle is embedded in the Fifth Amendment, which protects citizens from being deprived of life, liberty, or property without due process of law.

While the Constitution restrains our own government, the principles it reflects have long guided U.S. foreign policy. Historically, the United States has opposed the confiscation of property belonging to its citizens by foreign governments.

Congress has acted when this has happened before. The Helms-Burton Act created legal remedies for Americans whose property was confiscated abroad during the Cuban Revolution. That legislation sent a clear bipartisan message: discriminatory seizure of American property is unacceptable.

What makes this situation particularly troubling is that American citizens who are Israeli settlers, along with American-based organizations, may be participating in or facilitating actions in the West Bank that would violate basic civil-rights principles if they occurred here at home.

If American organizations—especially those receiving U.S. funding or operating under U.S. law—are contributing to discriminatory confiscation of property, that raises serious questions about oversight, accountability, and the protection of American citizens.

Allowing this situation to continue would set a dangerous precedent. If one government can pass discriminatory laws that strip Americans of their property without consequence, others may follow. That weakens property rights globally,

undermines American credibility, and signals that Americans can be targeted abroad without protection.

For that reason, we respectfully ask for three things:

First, that Congress exercise oversight into whether U.S. organizations or taxpayer funds are facilitating these discriminatory property seizures in the West Bank.

Second, that Congress encourage the State Department to raise this issue diplomatically with the Israeli government and highlight the precedent these actions set for Americans.

Third, that Congress consider legislative protections similar to those used in past property expropriation cases so Americans can have recourse when their property is confiscated through discriminatory laws.

Ultimately, this issue comes down to a simple question: Does Palestinian American citizenship carry real protection when are targeted abroad?

We believe Congress has both the authority and the responsibility to ensure that the answer is yes.”