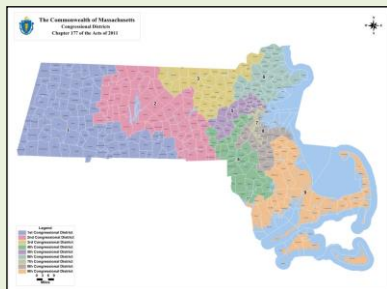


BULLETIN, June 2016

A New Day

Organizing to Change US Policy on Israel and Palestine



A New Day is the initiative of Massachusetts Peace Action, in collaboration with other local Palestine solidarity efforts and individual activists, aimed at strengthening efforts to influence elected officials and government bodies to change US policy. It grew out of a successful **CONFERENCE** in Cambridge last November that was attended by almost 200 people. The aim of this project is to build a powerful grassroots organization in every corner of our state that will focus advocacy and bring to bear the growing sentiment for a different US policy regarding Palestine and Israel. We hope that our initiative might also spur similar efforts around the country – what we have called “The 50-State Solution.”

Please reach out to your contacts to have them sign up for A NEW DAY by emailing A-NEW-DAY@masspeaceaction.org (and noting their Congressional District). (members will receive a limited number of action-oriented emails)

SEVEN MONTHS after our conference last November there has been substantial progress. **NEW DAY** follow-up meetings were held in **six of the nine Congressional Districts in the Commonwealth**, with local groups engaged in various levels of on-going advocacy. There are **volunteer CD coordinators** in each of these districts (CDs 4-9). MAPA’s Jeff Klein has agreed to coordinate NEW DAY organizing statewide.

Face-to-face meetings have been successfully organized so far with **three Massachusetts Members of Congress** (Capuano., Clark and McGovern) and some CD groups met with staffers; meetings with the other House members have been requested but not yet scheduled. Organized activity around this initiative is at early stages so far in CD1 (Rep. Neal – Western Mass), CD2 (Rep. McGovern – Central Mass) or CD3 (Rep. Tsongas – North-Central Mass); meetings in these Districts are expected to take place in the coming months.

We also organized a successful **State House briefing** – thanks to the sponsorship of Second Bristol (Attleboro) **Rep. Paul Heroux** -- by Israeli-American activist **Jeff Halper** that was attended by seven or more State Reps and Senators and staff members from at least 8 more.

We estimate that activists have been successfully encouraged to make large numbers of contacts with our House and Senate representatives on our issue – though we have a way to go before responses to **Action Alerts** are routine and more consistent.

We have to do better to broaden our activist outreach and to cultivate the habit of responding, to convince **NEW DAY** activists to make their action responses routine and to focus their interventions on a common agreed-upon message.

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THE POLITICAL LANDSCAPE

[US public opinion](#) on the issue of Palestine and Israel is changing for the better. This is [particularly evident](#) among Liberals and Progressives, the young and in the base of the Democratic party. However, this change has not yet meaningfully altered US policy – especially in Congress. Until we have built a larger and more effective political movement it is inevitable that much of our effort will involve opposing and countering the political influence and legislative agenda of the powerful, well-funded Israel Lobby. But we have also agreed on a few priority campaigns with which we can take the initiative.

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TAKING THE OFFENSIVE

Settlements

US politicians, along with Israel and its US Lobby, constantly assert their support for a Palestinian state while ignoring the growth of illegal Israeli settlements that make it impossible. They want to talk about negotiating an end to the conflict while erasing “settlements” and “occupation” from the discourse – as evidenced recently in the [dispute](#) over the **Democratic Party platform**. But long-standing official US policy is that Israeli settlements are illegal (or “illegitimate”) and “obstacles to peace.” Israel wants the settlement issue buried. We want it to be a key part of the conversation. That’s why we prepared a [briefing paper](#) ([shorter summary here](#)) on the bi-partisan US policy that has opposed illegal Israeli settlements over many decades.

We are asking our Members of Congress to re-affirm US policy against Israeli settlements and bring the issue to the forefront, where it belongs. Please print and distribute the settlement report to your elected representatives when you have the opportunity. Or use them for talking points when you call.

Lobby-Paid ISRAEL JUNKETS

Bringing elected officials and community leaders to [lobbyist-paid tours of Israel](#) has been a central and effective tactic of the US pro-Israel political machine for many years. Up to now this practice has largely gone unchallenged. After news broke that [ten Massachusetts State Senators would be traveling to Israel](#) on trips paid for by the Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Boston, **NEW DAY** activists wrote [op-eds](#) and letters, organized meetings with legislators and filed a [complaint with the Commonwealth Ethics Commission](#); other organizations circulated a [state-wide petition](#) which garnered more than 1200 signatures. The push-back against these trips also generated significant [media coverage](#).

If you have not already contacted your state legislator about this highly questionable practice, please do so (contact info for the State Senate junketeers [here](#)).

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CONGRESS: Issues and Activism

The most comprehensive overview of activities relating to Israel and Palestine in the US Congress is the [Legislative Round-Up](#) compiled weekly by **Americans for Peace Now**. It is worth checking out regularly – or you can also sign up for automatic email updates.

Current activity in Congress centers around four broad priorities of [AIPAC](#) (The American-Israel Public Affairs Committee) and its allied Israel Lobby organizations, **all of which we oppose**:

--ATTACKING Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions

Israel is mobilizing all its levers of political influence internationally to deflect the growing movement for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS), which it sees as a threat to its ongoing Occupation of Palestinian lands. In the US, Israel's allies have introduced legislation in Congress to obstruct the BDS campaign and are waging a nationwide [state-by-state campaign](#) to effectively outlaw BDS activity. Politicians in both parties have been enlisted in this effort. Opposition to BDS has recently been introduced into the Democratic Party Platform, at the insistence of Hillary Clinton's supporters.

In the **House**, [H.R.4514 – Combating BDS Act of 2016](#) was introduced in February of this year, shortly before the annual AIPAC Conference, and has garnered [116 co-sponsors](#) (87 Republicans and 29 Democrats – so far none from our state). The companion **Senate** bill, [S.2531 - Combating BDS Act of 2016](#) was introduced the same day and so far has [37 co-sponsors](#) (24 Republican and 13 Democrats, **including Senator Ed Markey – but not Elizabeth Warren**). There is evidence that AIPAC is meeting more resistance than usual in recruiting co-sponsors.

Contact your Representative and Senator Warren to encourage them NOT TO CO-SPONSOR these bills, whatever they may think of BDS, because they represent an attack on civic advocacy and free speech; TELL SENATOR MARKEY THAT YOU ARE VERY TROUBLED BY HIS SUPPORT FOR THIS MEASURE.

An anti-BDS resolution was filed in the **Massachusetts State House** last Fall but apparently went nowhere; however it is very possible that there will be new legislation filed in the next session. Stay tuned.

An earlier [ACTION ALERT](#) will allow you to contact both US and Massachusetts legislators on this issue -- but phone calls are even more important. A follow-up NEW DAY alert will soon go out.

--INCREASING US AID FOR ISRAEL

Israel already receives more than \$3 billion annually in US military assistance – much more than aid to any other country. In recent years this has been supplemented by hundreds of millions of dollars more in financing for various Israeli missile systems and other programs. Now Israel is asking for even more aid – up to \$50 billion over ten years – and an increase is supported by many Members of Congress, despite severe budget constraints to programs that benefit ordinary Americans.

In April, [83 Senators](#), including both *MARKEY* and *WARREN* – but not Bernie Sanders -- signed a [letter](#) asking for increased aid to Israel. Let them know that we have better uses for these funds at home than arming a military Occupation force in Israel.

--PROTECTING ISRAEL FROM INTERNATIONAL “PEACE PRESSURE”

Israel understands that as long as “final-status” negotiations are limited to bi-lateral talks with a powerless and divided Palestinian leadership there will be no real pressure to achieve an acceptable agreement. Therefore, its US Lobby, Israel's political friends in the US -- especially in the US Congress -- are working hard to limit “outside” pressure, the involvement of the UN or the firm application of international law. **Under these circumstances, Israel's Occupation – or outright annexation – will be effectively permanent.**

On April 14, 2016 [394 House members signed](#) an [AIPAC-backed letter](#) demanding only “direct negotiations” to resolve differences between Israel and the Palestinians -- and rebuffing any effort to “internationalize” the conflict through the UN, impose a solution based on international law or put pressure on Israel in any way. Sadly, all nine of the Massachusetts House members were among the signatories.

--UNDERMINING THE US-IRAN NUCLEAR AGREEMENT

Israel has long promoted escalating hostility and possibly war with Iran. Along with its US Lobby, it did everything possible to defeat the US-Iran Nuclear Agreement – and now in Congress there is a steady

stream of legislation aimed at undermining the deal or imposing new sanctions against Iran. The last thing we need are more enemies in the Middle East. **Tell your Members of Congress that we need to preserve the Iran Agreement and continue to move toward normalized relations, rather than imposing new sanctions.**

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WHAT YOU CAN DO

Contact your Representatives and Senators consistently on these issues. It only takes a few minutes. Emails will be tabulated by staffers, but phone calls are more effective; on-line petitions are less impactful. Postcards are also useful and will be read. Letters hand-delivered to Congressional offices in DC or locally are better than ones mailed through the post office, since security measures will delay them considerably.

CD1 – Rep. Neal (202) 225-5601	CD2 –McGovern (202) 225-6101	CD3 – Tsongas (202) 225-3411
CD4 – Kennedy (202) 225-5931	CD5 – Clark (202) 225-2836	CD6 – Moulton (202) 225-8020
CD7 – Capuano (202) 225-5111	CD8 – Lynch (202) 225-8273	CD9 – Keating (202) 225-3111
Sen. Ed Markey (202) 224-2742	Sen. Elizabeth Warren (202) 224-4543	