

# The Sabra Report

Raising Awareness and Encouraging Discussion About Israel

## Tlaib Gets Emotional as Omar Calls for Congress to Act Over Israel Travel Restrictions

Alex Pappas, Fox News, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2019

### Recap:

US Congresswomen Rashida Tlaib and Ilhan Omar condemned Israel's decision to impose restrictions on visiting the country and called on Congress to reconsider its \$3 billion in annual aid to Israel. "Denying a visit to duly elected members of Congress is not consistent with being an ally," said the congresswomen.

### The Context:

- Freshmen House Representatives Tlaib and Omar intended to visit the Jewish state but were barred admission after Israeli Prime Minister found their sole objective was to bolster the boycott against Israel [1]. Their itinerary included meetings with members of the Knesset and Israeli security officials although it was later disclosed that the meeting attendees were solely Arab MK's and members of Breaking the Silence, a group of former Israeli soldiers who oppose Israel's presence in the West Bank and East Jerusalem [2].
- Netanyahu's decision was announced shortly after President Donald Trump tweeted that it would "show great weakness" to allow Tlaib and Omar in. the move ignited a massive outcry from Democrats, including many on the pro-Israel side of the debate [3]. The Israeli government did ultimately permit Tlaib to visit her Palestinian grandmother under the condition not to promote the boycott while in Israel. Tlaib rejected the offer.
- Omar criticized Israel's move to "ban the first two Muslim-American women elected to Congress." A statement from the White House pointed to Tlaib and Omar's well-documented history of anti-Israel remarks and defended Israel's right to "prevent people who want to destroy it from entering the country".
- A 2017 Israeli law entitles the state to deny entry to boycott activists [4]. Supporters say the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement is a nonviolent way of protesting Israel's military rule over Palestinians, but Israel says it aims to delegitimize the state [5]. Most Democrats are opposed to the BDS movement and have voted overwhelmingly against the effort.

### Conversation Points:

- What could the Israeli American relationship look like if Omar or Tlaib one day win the presidency?
- What are the pros and cons of admitting Omar and Tlaib into Israel?
- Should American officials be immune to Israel's BDS law?
- Has Israel become a partisan issue?

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## Israel Willing to Let Gazans Who Want to Emigrate to Fly Out via Its Territory

Haaretz, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019

### Recap:

Israel will allow Gaza residents the opportunity to emigrate via Israel if a country is willing to accept them. According to one official, Israel would even pay for the flight from its Nevatim airport [6]. The government has asked numerous European and Middle Eastern countries to accept the Gazans to no avail.

### The Context:

- Hamas openly seeks Israel's destruction and took over Gaza in 2007. It has fought three wars with Israel and launched thousands of rockets at Israeli cities.
- Youth unemployment in Gaza is at 70% due in large part to Israel and Egypt's blockade of the Strip. Israel says the blockade is necessary to restrict Hamas's import of weapons and other materials that could be used to attack Israel. Rights groups argue the measures amount to collective punishment of the roughly two million Gaza residents [7].
- Last year, 35,000 Palestinians emigrated from Gaza via the Rafah crossing on the border with Egypt. Most of those leaving were relatively well-off, including 150 doctors.
- Emigrants normally leave Gaza for Cairo, with a final destination of Western Europe or North America. Those wishing to shorten the wait to emigrate must pay \$1,500 to a private firm in Gaza that works with Egyptian border officials. The average Gazan's daily wages are \$16.85 [8].

### Conversation Points:

- What will Gaza look like in the next 10 years if the blockade holds and its best and brightest continue to emigrate?
- Why did Israel decide to get involved with Gaza emigration?
- Why hasn't the Palestinian Authority stepped in to ease the plight of the Palestinian people in Gaza?
- Is it hypocritical for European and Middle Eastern countries to complain about Gaza's plight while rejecting ideas that could potentially mitigate the problems?

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## Israel's 1st Social Bank Set to Offer Credit to Those Who Find It Out of Reach

Shoshanna Solomon, Times of Israel, August 20<sup>th</sup> 2019

### Recap:

For the first time in 50 years, the Bank of Israel greatly reduced its capital requirements for new banks and Ogen is stepping in to help small businesses, first-time home buyers and nonprofit organizations shunned by other institutions [9].

**The Context:**

- One-fifth of Israel's population cannot get affordable loans from Israel's five largest banks, which provide 95% of all trade credit and 65% of all commercial credit [10].
- Ogen, formerly known as the Israel Free Loan Association, was founded in the early 1990s and quickly became a resource for low-income citizens. Since its founding, Ogen provided more than \$300 million in interest-free loans to over 60,000 families and small businesses, with a default rate of less than 1%. The financing was raised from individual donors.
- The new arm of Ogen will increase affordable credit supply by raising funds from impact investors. The bank will fund up to \$28,000 to first-time homebuyers, \$56,000 to small businesses and \$185,000 to nonprofit organizations at an average annual interest rate of 5%. Ogen will continue to provide interest-free loans through its donations.

**Conversation Points:**

- What factors contributed to the increased need of affordable credit in the early 90's?
  - Why are default rates so low on these interest free loans?
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**Notes:**

1. [ILHAN OMAR, RASHIDA TLAIB HINT AT CUTTING AID TO ISRAEL AFTER ENTRY DENIED](#), OMRI NAHMIA, JERUSALEM POST, AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup> 2019
  2. [Omar: U.S. Should Reconsider Aid to Israel After Banning Her, Tlaib](#), Gabe Friedman, Forward, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019
  3. [Omar, Tlaib denounce Israel over travel restrictions](#), HEATHER CAYGLE, POLITICO, AUGUST 19<sup>TH</sup> 2019
  4. [Omar: U.S. Should Reconsider Aid to Israel After Banning Her, Tlaib](#), Gabe Friedman, Forward, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019
  5. [Omar: Go to Israel, see 'cruel reality of the occupation'](#), STEVE KARNOWSKI, AP, AUGUST 20<sup>TH</sup> 2019
  6. [Israeli official says government actively pushing Palestinians to emigrate from Gaza](#), i24NEWS, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019
  7. [Israel actively pushing Palestinian emigration from Gaza, official says](#), Raphael Ahren, Times of Israel, August 19<sup>th</sup> 2019
  8. [Gaza suffers from brain drain as young professionals look for better life](#), Elior Levy, Ynetnews, January 18<sup>th</sup> 2019
  9. [Israel's First New Bank in Half a Century Seeks Poor Customers](#), Bloomberg, August 13<sup>th</sup> 2019
  10. Ibid.
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**The Sabra Report** is a newsletter intended to stimulate conversation about Israel by recapping major events & providing context. Our conversation points are meant to encourage discussion amongst friends and family.

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