

# The BLACK C o M M e n t a t o r

An independent weekly internet magazine  
dedicated to the movement for economic justice,  
social justice and peace - Providing commentary,  
analysis and investigations on issues affecting  
African Americans and the African world.

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## **African Americans for Justice in the Middle East & North Africa**

Below is a statement by fifty-five black activists and scholars insisting that the time has arrived for an African American voice on US policy towards the regions of North Africa and the Middle East.

For far too long African Americans have been compelled, by mainstream USA, to remain either silent on international affairs or only speak out on matters relative to Sub-Saharan Africa. With this statement by "African Americans for Justice in the Middle East & North Africa" a process unfolds of breaking the silence. In breaking the silence the signatories are stepping forward as advocates for peace, justice and sovereignty in these regions, and as such we are speaking out very directly, whether in opposition to the Moroccan occupation of the Western Sahara; in support of the democratic uprisings that began in Tunisia and spread to much of the Arab World; in solidarity with the Palestinian people's struggle for national self-determination; or against the various forms in which the US militarily - covertly and openly - intervenes in the internal affairs of sovereign nations. This statement also represents a recognition that the unique experience of African Americans in the USA can play a significant role by lending a hand to support the dynamic change sweeping the region and meaningfully contribute to bridging the cultural divides between the USA and the Middle East and North African regions at large.

This statement is an opening salvo. The signatories of this statement are committed to being outspoken and active in the cause of peace, justice and sovereignty in North Africa and the Middle East. ***African Americans for Justice in the Middle East and North Africa***, then is a process rather than an organization. We invite further signatories. We also invite questions and principled, constructive dialogue. And we look forward to building bonds of solidarity. Click [here](#) to contact African Americans for Justice in the Middle East & North Africa.

In solidarity,

Felicia Eaves, Co-chair of US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation

Bill Fletcher, Jr., writer/activist

Mark Harrison, Director, Peace with Justice Program, United Methodist General Board of Church and Society

Reverend D.A. Lams

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African Americans for Justice in the  
Middle East & North Africa - Unity Statement

**"African Americans for Justice in the Middle East & North Africa"** is an initiative that has been created in order to build solidarity, in a true Pan-African and Black Internationalist tradition, with the peoples and progressive social movements in North Africa and the Middle East that have been engaged in struggles for democracy, justice and national liberation. We come together from different organizations, institutions and movements, and some as simply individuals of conscience, who have concluded that silence in the face of injustice and oppression is unacceptable. We believe that African Americans in the United States of America have a special role in speaking out against enemies of peace, justice and democracy, both foreign and domestic.

The entire expanse of the African American experience in the USA has been one that has involved our fight for freedom and justice on the national *and* international planes. In addition to opposing slavery and the slave trade, African Americans in the 19th century expressed solidarity with the Irish struggle for freedom from Britain and Haiti's continuous struggles for sovereignty. In the 20th century African Americans were not only central to the creation of a global Pan-Africanist movement, but also situated ourselves in struggles around Irish liberation, opposition to the US occupation of Haiti, opposition to the Italian invasion of Ethiopia, supporting (and serving in) the anti-fascist struggle in the Spanish civil war, supporting the independence struggle of the Indian subcontinent and those of African former colonies in the aftermath of World War II, solidarity with the Cuban people, opposition to US involvement in Indochina, the struggle against South African apartheid and the list could go on to delineate numerous other struggles and efforts.

Despite white supremacist attempts - liberal and explicitly right-wing - to restrict the African American voice to matters of domestic race and African American issues, African Americans have regularly broken free of the mold. Though this has often come at some cost, such as when Dr. Martin Luther King spoke out against US aggression in Vietnam in 1967, it has largely been inconceivable for African Americans to remain silent in the face of global injustice.

With this as background, *African Americans for Justice in the Middle East and North Africa* has emerged as another voice for global peace and freedom that is united by the following:

1. We support all genuine, progressive struggles for national liberation, national

sovereignty, justice and democracy in the Middle East and North Africa.

2. The Arab democratic uprising - often referenced as the "Arab Spring" - has been a global altering process that has unleashed forces in struggle against neo-liberalism, neo-colonialism, and despotism, It has served as an inspiration for resistance movements in Sub-Saharan Africa, as well as in Europe (against neo-liberal/austerity economics), and here in the USA with the Madison, Wisconsin demonstrations in early 2011 and more recently the Occupy Wall Street/Occupy Together movement.

3. Central to the struggles in the Middle East and North Africa has been the struggle of the Palestinian people, a struggle for national liberation, the right of return, equality and justice. AAJMENA is deeply committed to this struggle and wish to more fully integrate this into the lives and struggles of the African American people.

4. We recognize that the USA has historically played an unhelpful and, indeed, backward role in the Middle East and North Africa. This has included supporting despots, the crushing of nationalist, progressive and left-wing movements and governments, providing near unconditional support for Israel's oppression of the Palestinian people, covert operations that infringe on national sovereignty, and direct military provocations and invasions. The USA must be called upon to repair the damage that it has done in this region by first *doing no harm*, and must instead recognize and respect the aspirations of the peoples of the Middle East and North Africa for sovereignty, justice and democracy.

5. We see the struggles in the Middle East and North Africa as struggles that have much in common with those conducted in Sub-Saharan Africa and in the African Diaspora. As such we are duty bound to address them and integrate them into the larger fight for global justice and peace.

We are, therefore, committing ourselves to:

A. Promoting education and discussion within Black America regarding the issues and struggles facing the people of the Middle East and North Africa.

B. Building solidarity with genuine, popular democratic struggles in the Middle East and North Africa for justice, democracy and national liberation and national sovereignty.

C. Organizing a vocal constituency of African Americans to take up this banner.

D. Promoting a clear demand for justice for the Palestinian people as central to peace and stability in the Middle East. In doing so we join together with non-African Americans, people of different faiths, including but not limited to Christian, Jewish, Muslim, Hindu, Buddhist, animists and others, who are committed to justice for the

Palestinian people. We believe that there is a special significance to working with progressive Jews in the USA and Israel who share our abhorrence to the system of oppression experienced by the Palestinian people.

E. Advancing the demand for a democratic foreign policy on the part of the USA that is based on mutual respect, non-intervention in the affairs of other nation-states, recognition of national self-determination and repairing the damage that it has created through its imperial foreign actions

F. Building links with progressive social movements in the Middle East and North Africa.

***Signatories***

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Kali Akuno

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