

U.S. Muslim Reps. Omar, Tlaib speak up against Israeli crimes after travel ban



Washington, August 20 (RHC)-- U.S. Democratic Representatives Ilhan Omar and Rashida Tlaib have stepped up their criticism of the Israeli regime after being banned from traveling to Tel Aviv, asking their colleagues to visit the occupied Palestinian territories to experience first-hand the regime's cruel policies and how they affect Palestinians.

Omar said at a joint press conference with Tlaib that suggested US President Donald Trump and Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu were working to keep lawmakers from fulfilling their oversight duties.

"I would encourage my colleagues to visit, meet with the people we were going to meet with, see the things we were going to see, hear the stories we were going to hear," Omar said. "We cannot let Trump and Netanyahu succeed in hiding the cruel reality of the occupation from us."

Netanyahu's regime said Saturday it would deny entry to Tlaib and Omar of Minnesota following an appeal from Trump. The lawmakers, who were planning a trip to both Jerusalem al-Quds and the West Bank, are supporters of the anti-Israel Boycott, Divestment, Sanctions (BDS) movement and have publicly criticized the regime despite pressure from both sides of the aisle.

Omar said the ban made them "feel like our (citizenship) certificate is less than theirs." "So we are going to hold our head up high. And we are going to fight this administration and the oppressive Netanyahu administration until we take our last breath," she argued.

Tlaib, a U.S.-born Palestinian-American who represents a Michigan district in the House of Representatives, is no longer expected to visit her aging grandmother in the West Bank as a result of the ban. Israeli officials later on said she could visit her grandmother but this time Tlaib refused to accept the offer.

The Michigan lawmaker became emotional as she recalled her grandmother's tearful phone call asking her to not visit them under such humiliating circumstances. "She said I'm her dream manifested. I'm her free bird," Tlaib said of her grandmother. "So why would I come back and be caged and bow down when my election rose her head up high, gave her dignity for the first time?"

The lawmaker also criticized Israeli authorities for allowing mistreatment of Palestinian women at Jerusalem al-Quds security check points. Trump warned Israeli officials last week that letting the two lawmakers into Israel would be a "show of weakness."

Israel controls entry and exit to the West Bank, which it occupied in 1967 along with East Jerusalem al-Quds and the Gaza Strip, territories the Palestinians want for a future state.

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