



Published on *The American Task Force on Palestine* (<http://www.americantaskforce.org>)

[Home](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#) > [Printer-friendly PDF](#)

---

## ?Tough love? will keep Israel and the Palestinians straight

Media Mention of Hussein Ibish in The National - March 28, 2014 - 11:00pm  
<http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/tough-love-will-keep-i...> [1]

### ‘Tough love’ will keep Israel and the Palestinians straight

[Hussein Ibish](#)[2]

March 29, 2014

Israel is used to indulgence from the West, but it's beginning to experience unexpected and uncomfortable forms of pressure. The Palestinians are used to being pressured by the West regarding Israel, but not on internal governance. It's high time for a period of "tough love" for both, and this seems to have begun. It's in everyone's interests.

Israel has been trying to get into the US visa waiver programme, meaning that citizens of Israel wouldn't need a visa to enter the United States. But US law requires that American citizens must receive the same treatment. And it's been clear for decades that Israel discriminates against Palestinian and other Arab Americans.

This was acknowledged by the state department last week when spokeswoman Jen Psaki noted: "The department of homeland security and state remain concerned with the unequal treatment that Palestinian Americans and other Americans of Middle Eastern origin experience at Israel's border and checkpoints, and reciprocity is the most basic condition of the visa waiver programme."

In other words, the Obama administration is not going to make Israel an exception in allowing it to discriminate against American citizens on the basis of their ethnicity, religion or national origin.

There has been a recent spike in the number of rejections of Israeli visa applications. In the House of Representatives, a bill that effectively exempted Israel from the reciprocity clause languished. Instead, in January, the committee on foreign affairs adopted the "US-Israel Strategic Partnership Act of 2013", which requires Israel to "satisfy" and "continue to satisfy" section 217 of the Immigration and Nationality Act for inclusion in the visa waiver programme. This requires "reciprocal privileges" for Americans.

The position of the state department and department of homeland security on Israel's well-documented discrimination against Palestinians and other Arab Americans means it clearly wouldn't qualify under the House bill.

Legislation pending in the Senate incoherently contains language that would both require Israel to comply with Section 217 and simultaneously be allotted a special dispensation to discriminate against Americans. Given the position of the House and the administration, it now seems almost certain that Israel's efforts to get the United States to wink at its undeniable record and practice of discriminating against Palestinian and Arab Americans just isn't going to happen.

The apparent collapse of efforts to include Israel in the US visa waiver programme is only the latest instance of what might be termed "tough love" coming from its western allies. This particular instance is pursuant to American anti-discrimination legislation and the rights

of all Americans.

But many recent comments from both Barack Obama and John Kerry, the US secretary of state, have been much more blunt about the dangers facing Israel in the event of a collapse of peace talks with the Palestinians, and the limitations of what the US might be able, or implicitly interested, in doing to prevent the “international fallout.”

Among the key examples of this is an even “tougher” form of “love” coming from the European Union and individual European states, who are beginning to put substance into their long-standing policies objecting to Israel’s illegal settlement project.

They have already insisted that multilateral and public sector projects don’t include funding or support for any settlements. And Germany, Israel’s closest friend in Europe, is pushing to extend those restrictions to bilateral and private sector projects in any territories “not under Israel’s jurisdiction before June 1967”. If that happens, most other European countries will quickly follow suit.

For their own purposes, both the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement (BDS) that seeks to target Israel as a whole rather than the occupation and settlements, and the Israeli government are trying to conflate the emerging European policy with BDS.

Benjamin Netanyahu spent a good deal of his recent speech at the American pro-Israel organisation AIPAC doing just that, with the overt purpose of making Europe’s actions seem anti-Israel, if not anti-Semitic. But in truth, the two are totally unconnected and pursuant to different goals.

Whatever BDS activists may imagine, European statesmen don’t read their blogs or Twitter feeds, and are not inspired by their rhetoric. The Europeans are pursuing the logic of their own policies and – since the United States does not appear to object to any of this – also potentially giving the Americans at least additional rhetorical leverage with Israel.

Europe’s policies aren’t anti- Israel. They are pro-peace and pursuant to international law. This is friends doing what friends should do: helping each other see what’s in their best interests and refusing to cooperate with self-destructive behaviour.

The Palestinians, too, require some “tough love.” The “love” they need is much greater aid and technical support from the West and the Arab world.

The “tough” part would be for the donor community to demand, as they can and should, that Palestinian advancements in recent years in good governance, transparency and security professionalism – many of which have frayed over the past 12 months – be at least restored to their former standards. The Palestinian people clearly want effective and accountable governance, and the donor community has unique leverage to help them ensure they get it.

The Palestinians and Israelis need their friends to help them achieve peace. But, like everyone, they also need their friends to help keep them honest. That’s what real friends do.

---

TAGS: [Internal Palestinian Politics](#) [3] [Diplomacy](#) [4] [Settlements](#) [5] [U.S.-Arab Relations](#) [6]  
[U.S.-Israel Relations](#) [7]

[Events](#) | [Daily News](#) | [About Us](#) | [Resources](#) | [Contact Us](#) | [Donate](#) | [Site Map](#) | [Privacy Policy](#)

[!\[\]\(e3275251d0893157c3584e20c81dc3ba\_img.jpg\) Front Page Features](#) [!\[\]\(9ab0e0ed3a1c2d865b438a931465ce60\_img.jpg\) World Press Roundup](#) [!\[\]\(cad03033ab873d30d908af7ccf65e600\_img.jpg\) ATFP in the News](#) [!\[\]\(228855918ab8a8f7108e4981e0b34184\_img.jpg\) Policy and Analysis](#)  
[!\[\]\(510b99c730283855faafe9fc79cf072a\_img.jpg\) Briefing Summaries](#)

---

**Source URL (retrieved on Nov 14 2019 - 8:35am):**

[http://www.american taskforce.org/in\\_media/mm/hussein\\_ibish/2014/03/29/1396065600](http://www.american taskforce.org/in_media/mm/hussein_ibish/2014/03/29/1396065600)

**Links:**

[1] <http://www.thenational.ae/thenationalconversation/comment/tough-love-will-keep-israel-and-the-palestinians-straight>

[2] <http://www.thenational.ae/authors/Hussein-Ibish>

[3] [http://www.american taskforce.org/internal\\_palestinian\\_politics](http://www.american taskforce.org/internal_palestinian_politics)

[4] <http://www.american taskforce.org/diplomacy>

[5] <http://www.american taskforce.org/settlements>

[6] [http://www.americantaskforce.org/us\\_arab\\_relations](http://www.americantaskforce.org/us_arab_relations)

[7] [http://www.americantaskforce.org/usisrael\\_relations](http://www.americantaskforce.org/usisrael_relations)