

ISRAEL AND INDIA

Indian delegation allegedly not allowed into Palestinian territory by Israel, writes to PM Modi

They claimed that the Centre's Israel policy had led to an increase in the West Asian nation's 'arrogance and high-handedness'.

by *Scroll Staff*

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Israeli soldiers shoot tear gas shells at Palestinians protesting in Gaza on March 31 | Amir Cohen/Reuters

The members of an Indian delegation who were allegedly not let into Palestinian territories by Israeli authorities have written to Prime Minister Narendra Modi, claiming that the “government’s appeasement of Israel has only augmented Israeli arrogance, high-handedness and discourtesy in dealing with Indian citizens holding valid passports and valid visas to visit Palestinian National Territory”.

Human rights activists Agnivesh and John Dayal and politicians Mani Shankar Aiyar and Mohammad Salim were among those who signed the letter.

The 13-member delegation was scheduled to attend an international conference on Jerusalem in Ramallah, **Al Jazeera** reported on April 12. Israel also reportedly barred the entry of a mufti from Sri Lanka, a Bosnian Muslim scholar, the head of Australia's Islamic Council and a Ghanaian MP.

OPEN LETTER TO P.M MODI ON ISRAELI HIGH-HANDEDNESS

**Shri Narendra Modi
Prime Minister of India
152, South Block, Raisina Hill
New Delhi-110011**

21st April, 2018

While the Modi government continues to claim that it has dramatically improved relations with Israel without diminishing our support to the Palestinian cause, the experience of an Indian delegation that was invited by the Palestine National Authority to an International Conference in Ramallah on 11-12 April 2018, would indicate that our government's appeasement of Israel has only augmented Israeli arrogance, high-handedness and discourtesy in dealing with Indian citizens holding valid passports and valid visas to visit Palestinian National Territory. Israeli approved entry permits valid for entry of Indian delegation into the Palestinian National Territory occupied by Israel.

All but two members holding diplomatic passports were turned back from the Israeli check-post at the Israeli end of the King Hussein Bridge (Allenby Bridge) that marks the border between Jordan and Israel/Palestine. Even the two members holding diplomatic passports were cleared only after hours, indeed in one case more than an entire day, of waiting and only after the intervention of the Indian Mission in Tel Aviv and the Office of the Indian Representative in Ramallah to remind Israel of the solemn India-Israel agreement to not require holders of Indian diplomatic passports to secure visas prior to entering Israel. All the others were humiliated, arbitrarily turned down and refused entry despite presenting valid travel documents. The Army personnel there behaved very rudely.

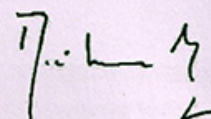
This exposes the tall claims made by the Modi government about the alleged goodwill of the Israelis towards our country and its nationals. It also exposes the hollowness of the current Indian establishment's claim to standing up for Palestine. Thousands of Israelis are given visas and enter India without any interrogation or hitch and are treated as guests. Whereas we saw hoards of Indian Christian pilgrims stuck for hours interrogated and harassed and misbehaved at the entry point before either allowed entry or refused entry in spite of holding valid entry permits..

What is urgently called for is immediate corrective action. We, the members of the Indian delegation, call upon the Government of India to agitate this case of ill-treatment of Indian citizens with the Israeli authorities and ensure reciprocal discourtesy to Israeli citizens visiting India if the Israelis will not apologize and mend their ways.



(Swami Agnivesh)

(Mohd. Salim, MP)


(Mani Shankar Aiyar)

(Harcharan Singh Josh) (John Dayal) (Mir. Akbar Ali Khan)

(Harcharan Singh Josh) (Niyaz Farooque) (Navaid Hamid)

(Zikrur Rahman) (Aboobakar Ahmad) (Mohd. Ameen) etc etc.

C.C.- to - Smt. Sushma Swaraj
Union Minister for External Affairs.

Security forces reportedly stopped the delegation at a check post on the Israeli side of the King Hussein bridge, which connects the country to Jordan. They reportedly allowed only two members of the delegation to enter the country as they were carrying diplomatic passports, and that too after intervention of the Indian Mission in Tel Aviv and the Office of the Indian Representative in Ramallah. The others were humiliated and refused entry despite possessing valid travel documents, the delegates claimed in their letter. They also accused the Israeli Army personnel of behaving rudely with them.

This, the signatories to the letter alleged, exposed the Centre's claims about Israel's feeling of goodwill towards Indians and the assertion that it stands up for Palestinians.

"What is urgently called for is immediate corrective action," the delegates said. "We, the members of the Indian delegation, call upon the government of India to agitate this ill-treatment of Indian citizens with the Israeli authorities and ensure reciprocal discourtesy to Israeli citizens visiting India if the Israelis will not apologise and mend their ways."

Israeli security forces have **killed** 32 Palestinians in Gaza since March 31, when they started gathering to demand the right of Palestinian refugees to **return** to their homes that are now in Israel.

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