

How to Start a Local Campaign

Version 1.0

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Find Allies

You probably already know a few supportive people, but you should also contact local Arab and Muslim groups, mosques, anti-war and other leftist political groups (be wary of groups that may try to dominate or "take over" your own - ask around if you're unfamiliar with a group's reputation). Include both community and campus-based organizations if both are active in your area. Develop two lists: people already strongly committed to the project (who will be invited to a small, private meeting), and people who may need a little convincing (to invite to a later, public meeting). The Palestine Freedom Project (www.pfproject.org) can assist you in identifying local contacts.

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Hold a Private Meeting

Hold the meeting in a semi-public place (NOT a person's home). Provide basic refreshments, such as coffee and snacks. At this meeting, you'll determine the preliminary structure of the organization, including committee names and functions, and plan the first public meeting. Develop ideas for one or two actions or events that can be discussed and further refined by the larger group when the public meeting takes place. You may want to establish an internal electronic mailing list for organizers before the public meeting.

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Hold a Public Meeting

The venue should be in a place that is accessible to the public, but also semi-private, such as a community center, or campus building. It's a good idea to meet in a building with multiple spaces, so that you can meet in a small space, but move to a larger one if high numbers of people show up unexpectedly. Provide coffee, tea, and other refreshments, but be conscious of potential dietary restrictions (halal, kosher, vegetarian, vegan). Allow 15-30 minutes for socializing after the official start time. The agenda should begin with introductions/icebreakers, then a brief discussion of the current situation in Palestine and local public opinion. Participants should then be given a list of committees, and asked to choose one to join initially. Then, break the group into individual committees for further discussion for a set period of time. Each committee should be assigned one organizer to facilitate the discussion and collect contact information. During these discussions, choose a new member from each committee to report back on the discussion to the larger group. Reconvene for committee reportbacks. Make sure that everyone leaves with a unique task: this is the best way to ensure that they'll remain involved.

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Get Down to Work

Now it's off to the races. Draft a mission statement. Construct a web site. Establish a public email list for announcements. Conduct research. Plan actions. Write op/eds. Attend conferences. Grow your network. Free Palestine.

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Plug In

Fortunately, you're not alone. There are over 800 Palestine solidarity organizations in the US alone, many of which are organized into two major national coalitions with overlapping memberships: the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation (www.endtheoccupation.org) and the Palestine Solidarity Movement (www.palestinesolidaritymovement.org). Additionally, an organization called the Palestine Freedom Project (the authors of this document) is specifically focused on providing valuable resources and logistical support to organizations like yours. We operate a speakers bureau, provide how-to materials and activist skills training, and maintain a database of every Palestine solidarity organization on the planet. Visit our web site at www.pfproject.org and join our low-volume mailing list to receive announcements concerning new resources and programs as they become available.

Helpful Hints for Starting Local Campaigns



Research

Fayyad Sbaih's *Fighting the New Apartheid* (<http://alawda.rso.wisc.edu/docs/divestguide.pdf>) contains excellent suggestions on how to research institutional ties to Israel (focusing on universities). To learn how to research corporations, check out the links at www.corporations.org/research.html.

Meeting Facilitation

Some of the most effective methods for facilitating meetings are described in resources collected at www.consensus.net.



Project Management

Your group's work will be much easier if you keep track of it efficiently. You can use collaborative spreadsheet tools like Google Docs & Spreadsheets (www.google.com/google-d-s/tour1.html) and the database feature of Yahoo Groups (www.groups.yahoo.com) to track the status of each task. Email pfproject@pfproject.org for specific suggestions on how to do this.

Contact Management

In the early stages, it may be best to use a simple spreadsheet program like Microsoft Excel (<http://office.microsoft.com/en-us/excel>) or OpenOffice.Org Calc (www.openoffice.org/product/calc.html) to keep track of your organization's contacts (which include everyone from your own members to media outlets and vendors), but you may eventually want to upgrade to something like Microsoft Outlook with Business Contact Manager (www.microsoft.com/office/outlook/contactmanager/prodinfo)



Media Relations

The best starting place to learn about making effective use of the media is Clarence Jones' book, *Winning with the News Media*, which can be purchased used for around \$10. Additionally, the Palestine Freedom Project offers skills training in this area. Email pfproject@pfproject.org for details.

General Resources

Another excellent book on building activist organizations, although more focused on local-issue activism than international human rights advocacy, is *Organizing for Social Change*, published by the Midwest Academy. It can also usually be found for around \$10 if purchased used. Finally, the Palestine Freedom Project is developing a comprehensive handbook for Palestine solidarity activism in a modular format. The first module, devoted to the use of technology, will be available before the end of 2006, and the second module, devoted to the planning and execution of events, actions, and programs, will be available before Summer, 2007. Visit www.pfproject.org for details.



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