

Dear student AIPAC delegates,

You are a community leader on your campus and your peers look up to you. Your influence is why AIPAC has invested so much money in having you attend this convention.

This weekend is a grand effort to paint a rosy picture of Israel, one that ignores ongoing human rights violations. You will hear from various important political players, all slated to speak about the good Israel does. They will give the impression that Israel's values and actions promote peace and security in the world, and that anyone who questions Israel is aligned with terrorism and instability. Indeed, this AIPAC conference puts all its efforts into dazzling you—whom they assume to be an impressionable student with little knowledge of the Palestinian-Israeli conflict—with its political influence.

We, students and concerned citizens throughout the country, disagree with the AIPAC narrative that Israel's values and actions promote peace and security in the world. In fact, we believe that the Israeli government's lengthy track record of violating international law, ignoring the human rights of Palestinians, and using excessive military force against civilians is what promotes instability and violence.

We invite you to join with us, and the people of Israel and Palestine and throughout the world—including Jews, Christians, Muslims and others—who stand for peace, equality, self-determination and democracy for all regardless of religion, ethnicity, or the color of one's skin.

We'd like to bring a few facts to your attention:

1. AIPAC says that Israel wants peace, and that it supports a two-state solution.

Who wants peace? AIPAC promotes Israeli policies that are in direct opposition to international law and are extremely counterproductive to the peace process. These include the establishment of illegal Jewish-only settlements on Palestinian land in the occupied West Bank, and the confiscation of Palestinian land in its construction of a 26-foot high concrete separation wall running through the West Bank.

The continued expansion of settlements and the separation wall, which is being built illegally and deep within the West Bank, makes it more and more difficult to achieve a solution to the Israel/Palestine conflict. Netanyahu's calls for 'direct talks without preconditions'—meaning without an Israeli obligation to stop taking Palestinian land—are a slap in the face of Palestinian West Bank residents who see their homes and lives encroached on every day by settlements and have called for, at the very least, a stop to settlement expansion.

Worse, AIPAC pushed for the current war in Iraq, which has killed nearly 4,500 young Americans and well over 100,000 civilian Iraqis. That war is now widely considered by the American people to have been a misguided failure. Now AIPAC is essentially pushing for war on Iran. War is peace?

2. AIPAC calls Israel "the only democracy in the Middle East," and says it stands for democracy.

Did you cheer when Egyptian dictator Hosni Mubarak fell from power? AIPAC didn't. AIPAC looks at the entire Arab world through the lens of Israel, not the democratic aspirations of the people who live there. It has supported corrupt, repressive regimes that are friendly to Israel, such as Egypt's Mubarak. AIPAC is not interested in the struggles for democracy now unfolding in the Middle East, and works to keep U.S. policy-makers from fully supporting democratic movements in the Arab world.

3. AIPAC says they want to empower your voice and help you build relationships.

What kinds of conversations or relationships are based on silencing dissent? AIPAC attempts to silence criticism of

Israel by fueling an environment in which critics of Israeli policy are labeled “anti-Semitic,” “de-legitimizers” or “self-hating Jews.” Students, professors, journalists, and think tanks, including many Jews, have been accused of anti-Semitism for merely taking stands critical of Israeli policy.

Add in AIPAC’s ties to political donors capable of giving millions to elected officials, and you have Washington DC’s open secret: numerous Congressmen and women want Israel to be accountable to the law and human rights, but are too afraid to say so publicly for fear of losing donations and ultimately, their jobs. Too many are close to AIPAC because they are afraid of AIPAC.

These attacks stifle the critical discussions and debates that are at the heart of democratic policy-making. The recent attacks on staffers at the Center for American Progress initiated by a former AIPACer are but one example of AIPAC’s efforts to crush all dissent. What can you not say, or not ask, at this conference?

We encourage you to learn from alternative sources:

- OccupyAIPAC.org
- JewishVoiceforPeace.org
- YoungJewishProud.org
- 972mag.com
- Mondoweiss.net
- ElectronicIntifada.com

4. From the AIPAC website: “AIPAC empowers students to be confident advocates for Israel.”

AIPAC to Campus: We’ll take over your student government! AIPAC doesn’t just try to influence Congress—they want to control campus politics too. AIPAC pushes Hillels and Jewish organizations on campus to shut down events or speakers that AIPAC doesn’t support. In 2010 UC Berkeley’s student senate voted to divest from Occupation profiteers—companies that make money from the Israeli occupation of the West Bank. A week later, the vote was vetoed by the student senate president. Why? AIPAC’s Leadership Development Jonathan Kessler predicted this move and said, “We’re going to make sure that pro-Israel students take over the student government and reverse the vote...This is how AIPAC

operates in our nation’s capital. This is how AIPAC must operate on our nation’s campuses.” And indeed, in the following election, the new 2010–11 UC Berkeley student body president Noah Stern was a former AIPAC intern (who committed well-documented voter fraud to get elected). (see <http://j.mp/yX7BD2>).

We encourage you to find out more.

AIPAC has brought you here to give you one set of pre-fabricated perspectives. Don’t let others script your opinions, or stop you from learning more, or tell you that it’s dangerous even to talk with other students and activists whose information sounds different than yours. Explore other perspectives. Be critical of the world we share. We want to talk with you—but AIPAC doesn’t want you asking these questions.

Sincerely,

Members of Young Jewish Proud, the youth wing of Jewish Voice for Peace

Members of Students for Justice in Palestine Groups on Campuses throughout the United States