

Israel denies entry to Americans attending Jericho prisoner conference

Saturday 28/11/2009 (Last Update) Time 17:35



Salam Fayyad opens the conference in Jericho [MaanImages]

Bethlehem - Ma'an - Israeli border guards denied Americans Dhoruba Bin Wahad and Naji Mujahid entry into Palestine on Monday as they attempted to travel to Jericho for a conference on Palestinian prisoners illegally incarcerated in Israeli jails.

The men, a civil rights activist and a student, attempted to enter the West Bank via the Allenby Bridge from Jordan.

"The Israelis did not deny us entry into Palestine for legitimate security reasons," Bin Wahad announced in a video statement following the denial. "Ultimately we barred because of what we think and not for any other reason."

Bin Wahad is a former political prisoner and leader of the Black Panther Party whose conviction was overturned after spending 19 years in prison for a crime he did not commit.

Naji Mujahid is a Washington, DC-based student and activist.

According to a statement from the men, they were invited to attend the International Conference on Palestinian Political Prisoners in Jericho that ran from Tuesday 24 November to Thursday 26 November.

Testimony published by their supporters said they "rode a tourist bus to the bridge separating Jordan from Palestine, where, as the only two Black people on the bus, they were separated from the rest of the tourists, who were

permitted to go on their way."

The report said they were then interrogated, strip searched, and had their belongings confiscated before they were ordered to return to Jordan.

Following the denial of entry the two went to the office of the Palestinian Authority in Amman, Jordan, but were told there was nothing the office could do to help them gain entry into Palestine.

In their statement the men said their treatment mirrored "Israel's policy of driving Palestinians out of their homeland through settlement-building, land confiscation, checkpoints, the Judaization of Jerusalem, and the enactment of discriminatory laws against Palestinians in the parts of Palestine that were occupied in 1948. It also mirrors Israel's continued denial of the right to return home to for over seven million Palestinian refugees and exiles."

Israel's actions prevented important meetings between former American and Palestinian political prisoners, the statement said, as well as disrupted the media coverage that both Dhoruba and Naji had arranged to provide for African American community news outlets about the conference, Palestinian political prisoners and the Palestinian struggle for liberation.



Source: <http://www.maannews.net/eng/ViewDetails.aspx?ID=243021>

