

Manifesto

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Our Mandate

To identify, articulate, defend and pursue the rights and interests of the Palestinian people in Canada, in exile, and in all of Historic Palestine.

Founding Principles

The Founding Principles are not statements of sentiment. Under our By-laws, the National Council holds exclusive authority over the Congress's political positions and direction — and that authority is bounded by these principles. A position that contradicts them is out of order, whoever proposes it. They are the fixed point around which everything else is debated. Registering as an elector will require agreeing with them. That is deliberate. It is the one thing we ask of everyone who joins.

1. We are a diverse community, integral to both Canada and Palestine.

Palestinian Canadians are a diverse community that is integral to both Canadian society and the broader Palestinian people. We are not visitors in this country, and we are not separated from our people. We are fully both, and we refuse to be asked to choose.

2. The Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms is our foundation.

We respect and support the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms and act consistently with the values enshrined in it. The rights we claim for our community are the rights the Charter guarantees to everyone in Canada.

3. We advance the interests of our community in Canada.

As a conduit of the Palestinian Canadian community within Canadian society, we advance the political, civil, social and economic interests of Palestinians in Canada — in Parliament and legislatures, in institutions, in the media, in workplaces and on campuses.

4. Self-determination and equality on our ancestral lands.

We affirm, advocate for and commit to the historic rights of the Palestinian people to self-determination and equality on their ancestral lands.

5. Return is a right, not a bargaining chip.

We affirm the inalienable right of return and compensation for all Palestinian refugees expelled from their lands and homes — those in the diaspora, those in neighbouring countries, and those internally displaced. That right is held collectively by the Palestinian people and individually by every Palestinian. Because it belongs to the refugees themselves, it is not available to be abrogated, ceded, negotiated away or otherwise compromised by any individual or entity, Palestinian or otherwise, in the context of any political solution.

6. Every faith among us; no faith adopted by us.

We represent Palestinian Canadians regardless of their faith, and we adopt or advocate no religious or spiritual belief or practice of our own. That does not narrow our advocacy: we defend the civil and human rights of Palestinians, including the right to practise, celebrate and express their religious and spiritual traditions freely, without discrimination, interference or unequal treatment.

7. Independent of every Palestinian party and faction.

We do not endorse or support any political party or political faction in Palestine. Our independence is what lets us represent the whole community. It does not stop us from building relationships with, or sending delegates to, international and pan-Palestinian organizations, conferences and events.

8. Responsible, democratic, and united without being uniform.

Those who hold office in the Congress — councillors, trustees and officers — commit to govern responsibly and sustainably, to promote constructive internal dialogue, to accept the outcome of democratic decision-making, to anchor their advocacy in the Canadian context, and to prioritize unity in purpose and action. Unity does not require uniformity of views or strategies. It requires a shared commitment to the Palestinian Canadian community, to this organization, and to these principles.

Our Vision

We envision a future in which the rights of the Palestinian people are realized, and in which Palestinian Canadians contribute fully to Canadian life as Palestinians — a community whose culture is practised and renewed, not merely preserved.

Our Mission

Our mandate reaches Palestinians in Canada, in exile, and in all of Historic Palestine. We pursue all of it through Canadian channels: Canadian law, Canadian policy, Canadian institutions and Canadian public life. That is where we have standing, and where our advocacy is anchored. We fulfil our mandate through the following core advocacy tracks:

1. Identity Advocacy

We promote the living culture and heritage of the Palestinian people, and inform the Canadian public about Palestinian human rights.

2. Rights Advocacy

We work to change Canadian law and policy — so that the rights of Palestinian Canadians are protected in practice and not only in principle, and so that Canada's conduct abroad is consistent with international law.

3. Accountability Advocacy

We hold Canadian elected officials, public servants and public institutions to their existing human rights obligations — in the laws they pass, the policies they administer, and their conduct toward our community. We press them to name anti-Palestinian racism, and to counter and eliminate the bias and discrimination directed against Palestinian Canadians.

Our Operational Values

Our Founding Principles say what we stand for. The operational values say how we conduct ourselves in pursuing them. They bind everyone who acts for the Congress - councillors, trustees, officers, staff and volunteers. Where a value and a Founding Principle differ in wording, the Founding Principle governs.

1. **Independence:** No external body — governmental, partisan, factional or financial — directs the positions of the Congress. We disclose relationships that a reasonable elector would want to know about, and we decline funding that carries conditions on what we may say.
2. **Non-partisanship in Canada:** We assess Canadian parties, candidates and office-holders by their records and by their conduct toward our community. We do not endorse, support or oppose any Canadian political party or candidate.
3. **Accountability to Our Electors and Donors:** The Congress answers to the people it represents and to the people who fund it. Donated funds are spent on the work of the Congress and accounted for; where a donor asks that a gift be used for a particular purpose, we either honour that purpose or decline the gift. Any decision a reasonable elector would read as departing from the Founding Principles goes to the National Council. It is not taken quietly.
4. **Accuracy and Correction:** Our credibility is the asset our advocacy runs on. We source what we publish, we distinguish what is documented from what is alleged, and when we get something wrong, we correct it publicly and promptly rather than letting it stand.
5. **Inclusion and Constructive Disagreement:** We work with people of every background, faith and political outlook, within our community and beyond it. Our minutes record dissent as well as decisions, and once a decision is made, we hold to it.
6. **Participation and Capacity:** We train and hand over. We bring community members into the work rather than speaking on their behalf; we credit the people who do the work, and we measure ourselves partly by how many Palestinian Canadians can advocate effectively without us.

Becoming an Elector

Any Palestinian Canadian aged 16 or over who agrees with these Founding Principles, and agrees to comply with our By-laws, will be able to register as an elector.

Electors vote for the councillors who set the political direction of the Congress, take part in policy conventions, and can bring policy motions forward themselves.

For these purposes, "Palestinian" includes anyone of Palestinian descent from either parent, their adopted children, their parents, and their spouses. "Palestinian Canadian" includes citizens, residents, and Palestinians residing and seeking asylum in Canada.

Registration opens at palcancongress.ca.

Becoming a Volunteer

Most of the work of the Congress is done by volunteers, and you do not need to be Palestinian to do it. Palestinian Canadians and non-Palestinian Canadians are both welcome. Allies who support Palestinian rights bring skills, networks and reach that strengthen our advocacy — in research and writing, law and policy, media and design, events, translation, fundraising and community organizing. What we ask is that you work within our Founding Principles and hold to our Operational Values, which bind everyone who acts for the Congress.

Volunteering and registering as an elector are different things, and they are not alternatives — any Palestinian Canadian aged 16 or over can do both. Electorship is a status: it carries the right to elect the councillors who set our political direction, to take part in policy conventions, and to bring policy motions forward. Volunteers who are not electors do the work but do not hold those rights. They do not vote in Council elections or at policy conventions, and they do not stand for councillor. That line exists for one reason: the political direction of a Palestinian organization is set by Palestinians. Everything else, we build together.

Join our team at palcancongress.ca.

Definitions

- ◇ A **Manifesto** is a public declaration of intentions and an approach to bringing change. It allows for alignment among engaged parties and builds trust.
- ◇ A **Mandate** is a statement that defines the purpose, target population, and boundaries of the organization's work. It acts as the guiding compass for leadership. It states what change the group wants to make and who it serves.
- ◇ The **Founding Principles** are the fundamental principles set out in Article 2 of the By-laws. They bound the National Council's authority over political positions and direction, and agreeing with them is a condition of registering as an elector.

- ◇ A **Vision** statement describes the community's desired future state. It inspires the team by showing them what success looks and feels like.
- ◇ A **Mission** statement describes the organization's purpose, audience, overall objectives, and approaches to achieving them.
- ◇ The **Operational Values** are the standards of conduct that govern how everyone acting for the Congress carries out the work. Where a value and a Founding Principle differ in wording, the Founding Principle governs.