

# Palestinian activist Nerdeen Kiswani and her attorneys speak out on Zionist assassination plot

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Palestinian activist Nerdeen Kiswani addressed a news conference Monday morning in front of New York City Hall to denounce the Zionist-instigated assassination plot that was disrupted last week by the arrest of 26-year-old New Jersey resident Alexander Heifler in a joint FBI-New York Police Department operation.

Three of Kiswani's civil rights attorneys and several other political activists joined her at the press conference, which was covered by a number of local media outlets and drew a supportive crowd.

Kiswani pointed to the activists supporting her and said, "I'd just like to point out that the largest demographic of supporters that we have today actually came from Muslim women and from Jewish communities who are standing unequivocally against this attack on me."

She added, "Today I am standing here not just as an organizer, but as a mother, as a Palestinian, and as someone who was a target of a Zionist assassination plot that I have been warning has been inevitable for far too long. When I learned that someone was preparing to attack my home, building explosives with the intention of taking my life, I was not just processing that as a public figure. I was processing that as a mother, holding my infant, thinking what it means for someone to target my home—where my child sleeps, where my family is supposed to be safe."

Kiswani explained that Zionist organizations like the Jewish Defense League (JDL) and the fascist Betar organization had waged a coordinated campaign of harassment, threats, stalking, doxing and placing bounties on her head because of her role as a leader of Within Our Lifetime, which campaigns aggressively in defense of the Palestinian people.

She pointed to the history of Zionist extremist violence in the United States, including the 1985 murder of Palestinian-American civil rights leader Alex Odeh, who was killed by a bomb at his office. The killers escaped to Israel and were never held accountable. Kiswani said that Heifler intended to do the same: carry out a terrorist attack and then seek sanctuary in Israel.

Other attacks include the 2023 murder of six-year-old Wadi Al-Fayoumi outside Chicago, and the shooting of three Palestinian college students in Vermont simply because they were wearing keffiyehs.

"It's a pattern where Palestinians are dehumanized," Kiswani

explained, "where our lives are treated as less valuable, where violence against us is incited, justified, and ignored. So when we talk about Zionism, we have to be honest about who we're talking about. We're talking about a political ideology that in its practice has been used to justify the dispossession, dehumanization and killing of Palestinians."

In comments to the WSWs after the press conference, Kiswani said "they are trying to suppress anti-genocide, anti-war, pro-Palestinian, pro-freedom advocates by whatever means they can" and are "resorting to violence."

The more "they try to silence us, the louder we will be," Kiswani added. "I am not going to give them this win by going into hiding and not speaking out about Palestine anymore."

Eric Lee and Christopher Godshall-Bennett, whose law firm represents Kiswani, both addressed the press conference. Lee drew the connection between the planned violence in New York City and the ongoing violence in the Middle East.

Referring to the would-be assassin, Lee said, "His aim of silencing a Palestinian activist and murdering her young child mimics the official policy of Israel, where he planned to escape for protection. His method, that of a firebombing in the dark of night, is the method of the Ku Klux Klan."

An organized group of Zionists was involved in the preparation of the attack, he said. "They have group chats. He had a safe house. They have access to financial resources. Serious and credible death threats have continued against Ms. Kiswani in the days since the arrest."

Lee said the assassination attempt came just a month after Kiswani filed a federal civil rights lawsuit against Betar and its New York-based leadership—naming, among others, Ron Torossian of 5W Public Relations in Midtown, Ross Glick, Yoni Kletzel and John Mantell, along with the group's board of directors. The suit was brought under the Ku Klux Klan Enforcement Act of 1871, which prohibits private individuals from conspiring to deprive people of their rights.

Lee said Betar had spent more than a year targeting Kiswani—stalking and harassing her, issuing threats and attempting to terrorize her with "beeper" intimidation meant to evoke Israel's use of explosive devices in Lebanon. He added that the group had repeatedly encouraged others to attack her and had offered a cash "bounty" of \$1,800 to anyone who would assault her.

Betar, Lee said, “has urged the Trump administration to strip her of her United States citizenship and has confirmed that it met with the Trump administration in Washington to discuss Ms. Kiswani’s case.”

Lee raised the question: “What were the Trump administration’s contacts with Betar, and with the network that has been plotting against Ms. Kiswani for over a year?”

Lee argued that the broader political climate—marked by official indifference to, and even celebration of the assassination of Rene Good and Alex Pretti in Minneapolis—encouraged violent attacks by signaling that they would be tolerated.

“And so the attack on Ms. Kiswani is no accident,” Lee concluded. “It’s not the product of bad apples. It’s the deliberate and intended product of a political strategy by the Trump administration to cultivate extra-legal parliamentary militia forces to murder its opponents and suppress dissent in the aim of establishing a dictatorship in this country.

“We will do everything that we can in the courts to expose the right-wing conspiracy, but ultimately, the fight against dictatorship and right-wing terror is not going to be led from within the American state apparatus. It’s going to come from the population of this country, which is furious at what this government is doing, which is furious at what this terrorist network has done to our client. And here, as we prepare to celebrate the 250th anniversary of the Declaration of Independence and the revolution that gave birth to this country, we encourage the people of this country to understand that the responsibility of defending our client and whatever remains of democracy falls on you, the people.”

Christopher Godshall-Bennett, Lee’s law partner, detailed his deep personal connection to the case, growing up in New York City and choosing to reject Zionism, founding the first anti-Zionist Jewish organization at Columbia University, the Columbia-Barnard Chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace.

Godshall-Bennett said, “I find myself back in New York 12 years later to witness the results of a decade of tireless advocacy led by people like Nerdeen Kiswani. I see a city transformed into a center of solidarity with the Palestinian people and of opposition to Zionist supremacy. That victory is precisely why these Zionists have targeted Nerdeen. They are deeply afraid. They have lost their stranglehold on public opinion. and have fallen back on their original strategy, straight up murder.

“Organizations like the Jewish Defense League and Betar, both created in the image of founding Zionists, reflect the dark reality of Zionism, a twisted vision of Jewish life and community, safety through violence, peace through war, life through death.

“While we work to hold those accountable, who are responsible for this attack, I urge you to see them for what they are. Not fringe elements acting alone, but the very center of Zionism itself. There are those who will say that to do so is antisemitic, but that is a lie. The real antisemitism is that at the heart of Zionism, and in the founding documents of organizations like Betar. ... If you want to stand against antisemitism, stand with the Palestinian people. And with Nerdeen. Reject the movement that murders children and then uses Jews around the world as an ideological human shield to evade accountability.”

Jonathan Abady, another attorney for Kiswani, said, “It is an

honor and a privilege to represent her because she is a person of conscience. She is a person of tremendous bravery and courage and conviction. And what brings us here today is cause for great sadness and great outrage.”

He said that Kiswani and her supporters were demanding that the authorities “thoroughly and vigorously investigate and find the people who are responsible for this, to charge them, to arrest them and to prosecute them. All of them, not just some of them.”

Other speakers included Marwa Janini, executive director of the Arab American Association of New York; Amani Al-Katabkur, founder of Muslim Girl, a widely followed social media platform; Dania Darwish, founder and executive director of the Asya Women’s Center, which assists victims of Islamophobia; and Morgan Basikas, a member of Jewish Voice for Peace in New York City.

All of them noted the rise in anti-Muslim, anti-Arab and anti-Palestinian attacks, fueled by Islamophobic statements by government officials, in Congress and the Trump administration. Basikas declared, “We reject Zionism because we reject all forms of racism and white supremacy and colonialism. We reject any attempt to conflate anti-Zionism with antisemitism, which we recognize as a cynical, racist strategy to smear Palestinian activists such as Nerdeen and clearly endanger their lives.”

Kiswani and her attorneys took a series of questions from the press after the opening round of statements. She explained, “I have been going to bed every night worried about my child, worried about my family, my husband, my family, my siblings, my parents are always making sure that I don’t have to go anywhere alone. I share my location with all of them in case anything happens. And that was all before the assassination plot. So for this to happen, it just, you know, it confirms our fears. It validates them, especially because the threats haven’t stopped.”

The attorneys explained that the next action would be a hearing in the Southern District of New York on April 14 on the lawsuit against Betar brought under the anti-KKK Act.



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