

A message to Palestinian and Muslim American communities

I am writing to address some recent characterizations that have called into question Emgage's stance on the occupation of Palestine.

It is important for the community at large to know that we treat our work at Emgage as a sacred trust on behalf of Muslim Americans. We will go out of our way to preserve this trust. I have always sought to champion human and civil rights. From my days in University I have a track record of engaging in efforts to champion human rights including our communities in Palestine, Kashmir, Africa, and the like. I was a board member of an international development organization immediately out of college to find ways to assist those most challenged in our world. In 2008, I travelled to Egypt as an invitee of the Cairo Bar Association to be an international observer of the military proceedings against journalists to champion due process and transparency. In my career I have been labeled a terrorist sympathizer for being both Muslim and a criminal defense attorney representing those charged with terrorism allegations. My intentions have always been for the betterment of humanity and followed a principle of engagement not agreement, even if at times I make wrong decisions.

Questions have been raised about the engagement of myself and certain members of Emgage in our personal capacity in the Muslim Leadership Initiative (MLI). On behalf of those who participated in this trip, I would like to apologize for the pain that this has caused, it was a wrong decision. At the time we believed this was an opportunity for discourse and tangible change, and had the best of intentions. However, I regret this decision as it inflicted pain upon many of our Palestinian brothers and sisters and gave the perception that we were normalizing the Occupation. No benefit from the effort can compare to this harm. This trip was taken in our personal capacity and involved attendants outside of the Emgage board. As an organization of 100 staffers and national and local board members, Emgage was not involved nor has it ever been involved with MLI. In February of 2019, I called for a resolution that was unanimously adopted by the Emgage board of directors that prohibits members of our organization from participating in the MLI program, even in their personal capacity.

Emgage stands in solidarity with the Palestinian cause and the aspirations of our Palestinian sisters and brothers. Emgage has been accused of being a Zionist organization stating we have programing with ADL and AJC. Emgage has no such programming. Like many Muslim constituent organizations, we have been part of coalitions that include both Muslim and non-Muslim organizations. We are proud to have stood for Palestinian freedom and equal rights. Our record in support of human rights, whether by championing the cause of criminal justice reform and opposing detention of children at our borders, or speaking up for persecuted Muslim communities—from the Middle East to Kashmir and Myanmar to China, speaks of the spirit and heart of Emgage. We will continue to work in a constructive manner in the Muslim community and beyond to advance the just cause of these communities

I also recognize that we, as an organization, have not done enough to make our positions on Palestine as clear and prominent as we have with other areas of international and domestic policy. To that end, Emgage is committed to improving our engagement with the Palestinian American community. Contrary to what has been reported, Emgage never has and currently does

not have any affiliation or joint programs with any entity that works against the interests of Muslim Americans or Palestinians. We are also committed to continuing to improve our diversity on our state and national board to ensure that it truly represents the rich and beautiful diversity of our community.

I also want to echo Emgage's commitment to support the rights and liberation of the Palestinian people:

1. You can find our earlier statement [here](#), which details our positions on Palestine.
2. Emgage condemned [attacks](#) against Linda Sarsour following her participation at a DNC event. I personally wrote to the Biden campaign expressing my serious concerns.
3. Emgage PAC specifically asks leading political candidates, including presidential candidates, to publicly state their position on key Israel-Palestine issues.
4. Emgage PAC enthusiastically supported and actively canvassed for the election of proud Palestinian-American congresswoman Rashida Tlaib. Our Michigan team made over 70,000 calls, sent hundreds of thousands of texts, and raised tens of thousands of dollars towards digital ads to help support Congresswoman Tlaib's reelection.
5. Emgage actively pursued legislation and policies such as resuming funding for UNRWA and supporting the Betty McCollum bill as early as 2018
6. Emgage publicly condemned various actions by Netanyahu and/or Trump on annexation, moving the U.S. Embassy to Jerusalem, and recognizing Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights.
7. As a member of the 2020 DNC Platform Committee, I voted in favor of several amendments seeking equal treatment of the Palestinians in U.S.-Middle East foreign policy. I also worked to include language in the platform which was adopted that called for the right of Palestinians to live in peace and security, and for the protection of the constitutional rights of our citizens to free speech.

Emgage is an organization that prides itself on turning out Muslim voters, effectively advocating on issues, and supporting candidates for public office. As a representative organization of an enterprising community, we are proud to have advocated on domestic issues of significance to Muslim Americans— civil liberties to health care, immigration reform to civil rights. This has been in conjunction with efforts on key foreign policy issues including Palestine, Kashmir, India, Myanmar, and China.

We and our Million Muslim Votes campaign partners are committed to turning out a historic number of Muslims in November. There is too much at stake - we will continue to focus our energies on delivering on these efforts. Most importantly, I and Emgage will continue to listen to your concerns and engage in a dialogue on how we can improve. Working with you is precisely what Emgage seeks to do, and I look forward to moving forward.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to be 'Khurrum Wahid', with a large, sweeping flourish at the end.

Khurrum Wahid

Chair of Emgage National Board