

Hi, I'm Miryam Rashid with the American Friends Service Committee in Chicago. The AFSC has worked for over 90 years to end wars and help give voice to the most vulnerable members of society.

This is not the first time that our government has come after Palestinians and members of the progressive community in Chicago. Recently, a target was Mohammad Salah and that was intended to make Palestinians afraid of helping their families who are struggling for their civil rights in Palestine. Now the target is Hatem, a father and a friend to so many in the progressive community.

Most Americans do not know that Palestinians have been struggling for their civil rights and for equality and that our government has been supporting Israel's efforts to suppress them. The reality is that Palestinians are forced to use separate roads than Israelis who live right next to them, they are forced to have different color license plates so that they can be easily identified on the roads, and Palestinians are governed by different laws than Israelis who live right next to them.

The Palestinian community in Chicago, including Hatem, have friends and family who live under military rule, stripped of their civil rights. And they have been working to change U.S. policy that supports Israel's military occupation. The right to speak out against foreign policies that make people suffer should not be a crime. The right to dissent should not be a crime.

There is something very, very wrong with what the government is doing. Wars and military occupation are bad for all of us. If we don't speak up now about our fundamental and basic right to free speech, we will all be vulnerable.

How will anyone know that at some point, the person who dissents is not them or their loved ones? Let's act now to preserve our civil liberties.