

DEAR COLLEAGUE LETTER  
SENT TO THE NEARLY 100 MEMBERS OF  
THE CONGRESSIONAL PROGRESSIVE CAUCUS

**Recommended reading from Rep Khanna: A Day in the Life of Abed Salama by Nathan Thrall**

Sending Office: Honorable Ro Khanna  
Sent By: [Kate.Gould@mail.house.gov](mailto:Kate.Gould@mail.house.gov)

Dear CPC Colleague,

*The New York Review of Books* recently published [an extraordinary article](#) on Israel-Palestine by the writer and former director of the Arab-Israeli project at the International Crisis Group, Nathan Thrall. The *NYRB* has extended free access to the article (also attached as a PDF) and accompanying audio version through Tues April 20<sup>th</sup>.

I encourage you to read it. So, too, do many prominent figures deeply committed to resolving this tragic conflict, from President Obama's Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations to other veteran American negotiators, Israeli ambassadors, and American thought leaders on racial justice issues, including Michelle Alexander. Aaron David Miller, who served as an advisor to six secretaries of state, calls it "a must read for anyone brave and honest enough to face up to the obstacles standing in the way of a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace."

Heads of various Israeli human rights organizations [have also highlighted](#) the [importance of this piece](#). More quotes are listed below, and you can see a full list of endorsements [here](#).

This piece deepens and enriches our understanding of Israel-Palestine today. It deserves our attention.

Relevant links:

- The full article, accompanied by illustrative maps & striking photos & an audio version (simply click play on the audio player embedded at the top of the article): <https://www.nybooks.com/2021/03/19/a-day-in-the-life-of-abed-salama/>
- A video trailer for the piece: <https://vimeo.com/525853663>

With warm regards,

Ro Khanna  
Member of Congress

COMMENTS ON  
**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ABED SALAMA**

“I pray that Thrall’s article will remind President Joe Biden of the courageous stance he took against apartheid in South Africa as a senator. I hope that it will provide a mirror which shows that the very same type of laws that he opposed in South Africa are now instrumental in oppressing Palestinians, from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean.”

—**ARCHBISHOP DESMOND TUTU, founder of the Desmond and Leah Tutu Legacy Foundation and winner of the Nobel Prize for Peace**

“Beautifully written, even as it shares a devastating truth.”

—**MICHELLE ALEXANDER, Professor of Social Justice at Union Theological Seminary, *New York Times* opinion columnist, and author of *The New Jim Crow***

“One of the best pieces I have read on Palestine.”

—**J.M. COETZEE, South African writer and winner of the Nobel Prize in Literature**

“In a poignant tale of one man’s desperate search to locate his son, Nathan Thrall reveals the impact of decades of Israeli occupation on the West Bank and one of the principal reasons why the Israeli-Palestinian conflict seems so intractable. A must read for anyone brave and honest enough to face up to the obstacles standing in the way of a lasting Israeli-Palestinian peace.”

—**AARON DAVID MILLER, former State Department Middle East analyst and negotiator in Republican and Democratic Administrations**

“Monumental. ... An extraordinary piece. ... If you read one thing about the occupation—about what it means in people’s lives and how it came to be—just read this piece.”

—**PETER BEINART, contributing opinion writer at the *New York Times*, Editor-at-Large at *Jewish Currents*, and CNN Political Commentator**

“For years, we have been told that shared values are the basis for America’s special relationship with Israel. That myth is shattered by the deplorable reality depicted in Nathan Thrall’s powerful article. It is a reality that must be faced by anyone who supports the US-Israel alliance.”

—**AVRAHAM BURG, former Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, former Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel, and former Chairman of the World Zionist Organization**

“Please read this truly magnificent essay by Nathan Thrall. It’s the finest essay I have ever seen on the Occupation, as lived by Palestinians trapped inside it.”

—**DAVID SHULMAN, Hebrew University Professor, longtime *New York Review of Books* contributor, and winner of the Israel Prize**

“This is one of the most informative pieces I’ve ever read on the Israeli-Palestinian issue. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to understand the human cost of the conflict.”

—**FRANK LOWENSTEIN, Special Envoy for Israeli-Palestinian Negotiations under President Obama**

“Nathan Thrall’s piece ... thrust me right into the midst of all the historical, physical and human anguish that borders on the intolerable. I wonder, can anyone read this and remain unchanged?”

—**HANAN ASHRAWI, former Palestinian negotiator, former PA Minister of Higher Education, and founder of the Independent Commission for Human Rights**

“A strong article by Nathan Thrall—a very, very strong article.”

—**NOAM CHOMSKY, Institute Professor emeritus in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at Massachusetts Institute of Technology**

“Human rights—the idea that every human being is created *b’tzelem elohim*, in the image of God—are not just theoretical words on paper, but the ability to engage in daily life with dignity. Thrall’s heartbreaking story of Israeli control of Palestinians renewed my moral urgency that we need a real solution grounded in human rights.”

—**RABBI RACHEL KAHN-TROSTER, Executive VP of the Interfaith Center on Corporate Responsibility and former Deputy Director of T’ruah: The Rabbinical Call for Human Rights**

“We Israelis are very proud of the prosperous country we have built. Nathan Thrall, in his article, presents us with the full accounting. If Israel does not end its apartheid policy toward the Palestinians, we will always be a poor nation—morally and spiritually—with historical debts we will not be able to pay back.”

—**DR. ALON LIEL, former director general of Israel’s Ministry of Foreign Affairs and former Israeli ambassador to Turkey and South Africa**

“With exhaustive research, immense empathy, and spell-binding prose, Thrall shows us the human, which is to say, the tragically inhumane, face of the occupation. This is truth-telling—painful, heart-breaking, and necessary.”

—**DAVID N. MYERS, Sady and Ludwig Kahn Chair in Jewish History at UCLA and board president of the New Israel Fund**

“Nathan Thrall’s heart-wrenching essay lays bare the essential truth of Israel’s occupation of the West Bank: Palestinians live under apartheid. And we in the U.S. subsidize this illegal operation to the tune of \$3.8 billion a year. ‘A Day in the Life of Abed Salama’ needs to be read by everyone. Every word, from beginning to end. And then we need to do something about it.”

—**ROBIN D.G. KELLEY, Distinguished Professor and Gary B. Nash Endowed Chair in U.S. History at UCLA and author of *Freedom Dreams: The Black Radical Imagination***

“As a former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, it was painful to read Thrall’s powerful story of the human costs of Israel’s discriminatory policies. Every American official should read it.”

—**ILAN BARUCH, former Israeli ambassador to South Africa, Namibia, Botswana and Zimbabwe**

“Monumental...The saga of Abed Salama’s search for his son Milad has a primal power. ... Thrall narrates his tale with detachment and precision, reminiscent of Hersey’s Hiroshima.”

—**PHILIP WEISS, founder and senior editor of Mondoweiss**

“Nathan Thrall’s ‘A Day in the Life of Abed Salama’ reflects a sharp and profound understanding of the painful realities lived by Palestinians in the occupied Palestinian territory. A must-read.”

—**SHAWAN JABARIN, General Director of Al-Haq, the oldest Palestinian human rights organization, Commissioner of the International Commission of Jurists**

“As soldiers who upheld this systemic oppression, we can’t look away from the realities Thrall describes in this beautifully written and powerfully argued text. This is a must-read.”

—**AVNER GVARYAHU, Executive Director of Breaking the Silence, the organization of Israel Defense Forces veterans working to end the occupation**

“Thrall’s writing is gorgeous, and the breadth and depth of the historical and factual data he seamlessly weaves into ‘A Day in the Life of Abed Salama’ is breathtaking. All told, the piece is truly extraordinary, telling both the story of one Palestinian father’s tragedy and the story of the cascade of tragedies and injustices that have defined the lived experience of Palestinians at the hands of Israel, from 1948 through the present.”

—**LARA FRIEDMAN, President of The Foundation for Middle East Peace**

TWITTER COMMENTS ON

**A DAY IN THE LIFE OF ABED SALAMA**

“Drop whatever else you’re reading and take the time to read this brilliant and heart wrenching piece. You’ll never see the Israeli-Palestinian conundrum the same way again.”

—[LAURENCE TRIBE](#), **Carl M. Loeb University Professor and Professor of Constitutional Law at Harvard**

“If this story does not deserve a Pulitzer, which one would?”

—[GHASSAN SALAMÉ](#), **former Minister of Culture in Lebanon and UN Special Envoy to Libya**

“‘A Day in the Life of Abed Salama’ by Nathan Thrall in *The New York Review of Books* will tear your heart out. Now imagine an entire people living these realities. Exquisitely written, unflinching, powerful, expansive, told with a big heart and a brilliant mind.”

—[HAGAI EL-AD](#), **Executive Director of B’Tselem, Israel’s largest human rights organization**

“I haven’t read something so devastating in....I can’t remember how long. Take time for it.”

—[SEYWARD DARBY](#), **Editor-in-Chief, The Atavist**

“For a powerful on-the-ground description of how the Israeli government is committing the crime of apartheid, read Nathan Thrall’s superb article in *The New York Review of Books*. The discriminatory oppression he describes makes the reality of apartheid undeniable.”

—[KENNETH ROTH](#), **Executive Director, Human Rights Watch**

“Read this heart-wrenching story told by Nathan Thrall: it explains in a better way than any policy analysis why the national struggle for Palestine is inevitably becoming a human rights struggle.”

—[JEAN-MARIE GUÉHENNO](#), **former President of the International Crisis Group and former United Nations Under-Secretary-General for Peacekeeping Operations, 2000-2008**

“The most important piece on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in decades.”

—[JAMES ZOGBY](#), **President of the Arab American Institute and former Vice-Chair of the United States Commission on International Religious Freedom**

“The best thing I’ve read in years. ... A haunting, riveting masterpiece that everyone needs to read.”

—[OMAR SHAKIR](#), Israel and Palestine Director at Human Rights Watch

“Two months ago, Nathan Thrall published an incredible essay for *The New York Review of Books* about Palestinian life under occupation. It’s the finest piece of journalism I’ve read in a very long time.”

—[ELIAS MUHANNA](#), Manning Assistant Professor of Comparative Literature at Brown University and contributor to *The New Yorker*

“Brilliant, moving, and necessary. Stop what you are doing and read Nathan Thrall’s *New York Review of Books* essay.”

—[SAMUEL MOYN](#), Henry R. Luce Professor of Jurisprudence at Yale Law School and Professor of History at Yale University

“This is an astoundingly ambitious piece, a reminder of what narrative journalism can do. It’s a book, really, but you can and should read it for free. (And, if you’re Jewish, consider adding it to your haggadah this year.)”

—[ANDREW MARANTZ](#), staff writer at *The New Yorker*

“Read this devastating piece by Nathan Thrall on the lived reality of Israel’s apartheid toward Palestinians. It will break your heart and, hopefully, inspire righteous indignation, even action.”

—[MIRA KAMDAR](#), author of *Motiba’s Tattoos* and former member of the Editorial Board of the *The New York Times*

“Nathan Thrall’s masterly ‘A Day in the Life of Abed Salama’ is not merely the story of one man’s tragedy. It is a meticulous and scathing indictment.”

—[ADAM SHATZ](#), contributing editor at *The London Review of Books*

“This masterpiece by Nathan Thrall is a must-read. Whether you know nothing about Israel-Palestine or worked on it for years, you will learn something new about the regime Israel instituted to govern the lives of millions of Palestinians.”

—[ELIZABETH TSURKOV](#), fellow at the Forum For Regional Thinking

“An extraordinary piece by the indispensable Nathan Thrall.”

—[STEPHEN M. WALT](#), Robert and Renee Belfer Professor of International Affairs at the Harvard Kennedy School of Government

“Nathan Thrall, your piece was magnificent and heartbreaking. Thank you for the work you are doing.”

—[AYELET WALDMAN](#), Israeli-American novelist and essayist

“This is incredible journalism laying bare the reality of racist oppression and plunder that US taxpayers are subsidizing under cover of ‘shared democratic values.’”

—[MATT DUSS](#), foreign policy advisor to Senator Bernie Sanders

“This piece requires time, care and attention to make your way through, but the payoff is as riveting as it is devastating. Nathan Thrall at his finest.”

—[JOSHUA YAFFA](#), Moscow correspondent for *The New Yorker*

“An important piece.”

—[DANIEL KURTZER](#), former US Ambassador to Israel

“Nathan Thrall’s long, meticulously researched account of a bus accident in the West Bank, just out in *The New York Review of Books*, is a devastating portrait of the occupation and deserves a wide readership in this country, which subsidizes the untenable policies he describes.”

—[EYAL PRESS](#), contributor to *The New Yorker* and author of *Beautiful Souls*

“If you have time to read one more article this weekend, read this powerful piece by Nathan Thrall.”

—[SHIBLEY TELHAMI](#), Anwar Sadat Professor for Peace and Development at the University of Maryland and Senior Fellow at Brookings

“Take the time to read this masterful essay by Nathan Thrall in *The New York Review of Books*.”

—[ISHAAN THAROOR](#), foreign affairs columnist for *The Washington Post*

“This piece by Nathan Thrall is incredibly harrowing. It lays out a comprehensive narrative of Zionism but told through the story of a Palestinian man in the West Bank trying to find his son after an accident. It’s a long read, but it is worth it.”

—[YARA HAWARI](#), Senior Analyst of Al-Shabaka: The Palestinian Policy Network

“The best writer on Israel-Palestine today, hands down.”

—[SARAH LEAH WHITSON](#), Executive Director of DAWN and former Executive Director of Human Rights Watch’s Middle East and North Africa Division from 2004 to 2020

“Don’t miss Nathan Thrall’s journey into a day in the life of Abed Salama and his reality shaped by Zionism, occupation, apartheid & more. Unforgettable, gorgeous, well worth your time. Here’s my blurb about it for the *Jewish Currents* reading list: I implore you to spend a few hours with Thrall as he takes you on a dizzying, gut-wrenching journey with Abed Salama, a Palestinian father whose village is located in an area hemmed in on three sides by Israel’s separation barrier and on the fourth side by the apartheid road. Thrall weaves together an unbelievably rich tapestry of history and context behind an accident that seems disconnected from the occupation but is of course inextricably connected to it. He forces those of us who obsessively debate abstract ideas about Israel’s future to feel intimately what the policies carried out in the name of Zionism actually mean for the human beings most directly trampled upon by them. I don’t want to spoil anything else, so I will just say that this article is a true gift to anyone seeking deeper understanding about these issues as well as a fresh perspective on the challenges ahead. Please sit with Abed’s story for a few hours. It’s worth it.”

—[SIMONE ZIMMERMAN](#), advisory board member of *Jewish Currents* and US Director of B’Tselem

“Extraordinary. ... Rich in historical detail, rarely seen data, and meticulous research. But also a humanity that's too often missing.”

—[JOHN LYNDON](#), Executive Director of ALLMEP—Alliance for Middle East Peace

“Spend some time reading Nathan Thrall’s epic piece on life under occupation in the West Bank. It’s the story of one man’s quest to find his son, which lays bare the reality of life under Israeli rule.”

—[WAJAHAT ALI](#), columnist for *The Daily Beast*

“Heart wrenching and brilliant—painful to many who will relive this tragedy in these lines, and to the millions of other Palestinians living untold daily tragedies under Israel’s rule. Thank you Nathan Thrall for your writing, and *The New York Review of Books* for giving this space.”

—[TAREQ BACONI](#), Senior Analyst at the International Crisis Group

“Take time to read this chilling and moving piece by Nathan Thrall, about what life is like for Palestinians on a regular basis, in between airstrikes and ceasefires.”

—[ROZINA ALI](#), contributing writer, *The New York Times Magazine*

“A heart-wrenching story by Nathan Thrall, in which Israel’s control over nearly every aspect of Palestinian lives can be seen through one horrific traffic accident.”

—[JOSEPH KRAUSS](#), Middle East correspondent for the Associated Press