

U.S. House of Representatives
Committee on Natural Resources
Washington, DC 20515

October 31, 2024

Brian Becker
National Director
ANSWER Coalition
617 Florida Avenue N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20001

Dear Mr. Becker,

The House Committee on Natural Resources (Committee) is investigating the demonstrations on National Park Service (NPS) land in Washington, D.C., on July 24, 2024. The Committee is deeply concerned about ANSWER Coalition's (ANSWER) total disregard for public gathering permit provisions, as well as the organization's unscrupulous financial ties and its potentially improper political advocacy underlying July's violent protest.

As you are aware, ANSWER is actively involved in disruptive demonstrations in an effort to support a pro-Hamas, anti-Israeli agenda.¹ On July 23, 2024, NPS issued a public gathering permit to ANSWER, allowing for a public demonstration the following day.² Concerningly, ANSWER began advertising online for the July 24 planned demonstration approximately one month in advance,³ long before NPS issued its public gathering permit. ANSWER's online content provided interested parties not only the opportunity to purchase bus tickets to Washington, D.C., but also advertised the event as a chance to "surround the Capitol" and "arrest Netanyahu."⁴

ANSWER's protest quickly devolved into a riot as the organization either encouraged or lost control of the crowd.⁵ Before the sun set, demonstrators burned American flags, assaulted

¹ See ANSWER Coalition, *Palestinian Land Day: Shut It Down protests demand an end to genocide & colonization*, ANSWER COALITION (Apr. 1, 2024),

<https://www.answercoalition.org/palestinian-land-day-shut-it-down-protests-demand-an-end-to-genocide-colonization>; see also *TAKE TO THE STREETS: Stop the U.S./Israeli genocide in Gaza!*, ANSWER COALITION, <https://www.answercoalition.org/take-to-the-streets-stop-the-u-s-israeli-genocide-in-gaza>.

² See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2023, for July 24, 2023, on file with the Committee. Redacted version here: <https://www.washingtonexaminer.com/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/ANSWER%E2%80%94COALITION%E2%80%94PROTEST%E2%80%94PERMIT%E2%80%94NPS%E2%80%942024.pdf>.

³ See ANSWER Coalition Website, *Arrest Netanyahu! Surround Congress July 24 with the People's Red Line for Palestine*, (June 24, 2024), https://www.answercoalition.org/arrest_netanyahu.

⁴ *Id.*

⁵ See Brady Knox, *Protesters burn American flag at Union Station and raise Palestinian one in its place*, WASHINGTON EXAMINER (July 24, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/news/content/ar->

police officers, destroyed federal property, and raised foreign flags in place of American flags on federal property.⁶ Rioters also defaced the Columbus Plaza monument and the replica Liberty Bell with pro-Hamas graffiti.⁷ ANSWER is ultimately accountable for the behavior of the demonstration's participants, who broke nearly every rule of the public gathering permit, which NPS ultimately revoked.⁸

To be clear, the NPS-issued public gathering permit imposed basic but serious requirements on ANSWER as the permittee. The permit required that “[t]he area should be left in substantially the same condition as it was prior to the activities authorized herein.”⁹ More specifically, the permit stated that the “[p]ermittee will be responsible for any injury to, loss of, or damage to federal owned or controlled lands, waters, or resources (natural or cultural resources or facilities) resulting from [p]ermittee’s activities under this permit, 18 USC § 1361.”¹⁰ 18 USC § 1361 provides for punishment in the form of both fines and imprisonment. Additionally, the permit detailed that the permittee, its agents, and its representatives may be held liable for any costs and damages associated with any injury or damage to NPS resources under 54 USC §§ 100721-100725.¹¹

Other permit provisions prohibited “the alteration, damage, or removal of park resources or facilities”; attachment of any items—including signs and banners—to any landscape elements; and climbing, removing, or injuring any “statue seat, wall, fountain, light poles, elevator towers, or other erection or architectural feature, or any tree, shrub, or landscaping features.”¹² The National Park Service, following a recent arrest of a suspect involved in the protest, estimated the cost to repair and clean the graffiti alone at over \$11,000.¹³

Moreover, ANSWER’s activities on July 24 and their engagement in anti-Israel protests across the U.S. that target college campuses and critical infrastructure are part of the broader “Shut it Down for Palestine” (SID4P) movement,¹⁴ whose membership roster is comprised of radical anti-Israel organizations.¹⁵ ANSWER’s social media posts in the month preceding the July 24

[BB1qzmv0#:~:text=At%203%3A17%20p.m.%2C%20the%20United%20States%20Park%20Police.and%20everyon e%20was%20ordered%20to%20leave%20the%20area.](#)

⁶ See Rep. Bruce Westerman, *Free speech is no license for the violence and destruction at Union Station*, THE HILL (Aug. 3, 2024), <https://thehill.com/opinion/congress-blog/4808199-domestic-terrorism-protests-union-station/>.

⁷ See Rebecca Turco, *Some faded graffiti remains outside Union Station following protests*, WJLA – WASHINGTON D.C. (July 28, 2024), <https://www.msn.com/en-us/news/us/some-faded-graffiti-remains-outside-union-station-following-protests/ar-BB1qMlwZ?ocid=BingNewsVerp>.

⁸ See Rep. Bruce Westerman, *Free speech is no license for the violence and destruction at Union Station*, THE HILL (Aug. 3, 2024), <https://thehill.com/opinion/congress-blog/4808199-domestic-terrorism-protests-union-station/>.

⁹ See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2023, for July 24, 2023, on file with the Committee.

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² *Id.*

¹³ See *Towson woman allegedly vandalized D.C. property during Israeli Prime Minister protests*, CBS NEWS (September 14, 2024), <https://www.cbsnews.com/baltimore/news/towson-woman-allegedly-vandalized-d-c-property-during-israeli-prime-minister-protests/>.

¹⁴ See Rep. Bruce Westerman, *Free speech is no license for the violence and destruction at Union Station*, THE HILL (Aug. 3, 2024), <https://thehill.com/opinion/congress-blog/4808199-domestic-terrorism-protests-union-station/>.

¹⁵ See *July 24 Arrest Netanyahu! Surround Congress with the People's Red Line*, THE PEOPLE’S FORUM, <https://secure.givelively.org/donate/peoples-forum-inc/july-24-arrest-netanyahu-surround-congress-with-the-peoples-red-line> (linked directly from Shut it Down for Palestine’s “Donate Here!” website button, <https://www.shutitdown4palestine.org/about>); see also *About*, SHUT IT DOWN FOR PALESTINE,

demonstration list collaborative event partners, which include Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), Code Pink, and dozens of others. Concerningly, these groups and their affiliates not only destroy property and cause violence on university campuses and federal lands, but also have ties to U.S. foreign adversaries, such as Hamas, Iran, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).¹⁶

ANSWER and its partner organizations, including Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) and AMP, have well-documented connections to Hamas and Iran.¹⁷ For example, SJP and AMP founder Hatem Bazian raised money for KindHearts, which was investigated and had its assets frozen due to coordination with Hamas and Hamas officials.¹⁸ Furthermore, the Biden-Harris White House acknowledges that Iran is involved in funding U.S.-based anti-Israel organizations and protests.¹⁹ These Iran and Hamas-backed organizations include CAIR and AMP,²⁰ which partnered with ANSWER to protest on July 24, 2024.²¹

Additionally, the Central Intelligence Agency (CIA), Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI), and Department of Defense (DOD) have sounded the alarm on the CCP's longstanding efforts to use financial incentives to influence U.S.-based nonprofits and shape public opinion in the U.S.²² In recent years, the CCP has increased efforts to establish a "well-masked machine of influence" among U.S.-based nonprofits to promote their interests in the U.S. and across the globe.²³

SID4P-affiliated organizations, including ANSWER, have strong connections to the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).²⁴ Neville Roy Singham and his wife, Code Pink founder Jodie Evans, are heavily involved in the SID4P movement.²⁵ Mr. Singham funds the Progress Unity

<https://www.shutitdown4palestine.org/about> (listing Palestinian Youth Movement, National Students for Justice in Palestine, ANSWER Coalition, The People's Forum, International Peoples' Assembly, Al-Awda – NY, and Palestinian American Community Center (PACC) – NJ as founding organizations).

¹⁶ See *Contagious Disruption: How CCP Influence and Radical Ideologies Threaten Critical Infrastructure and Campuses Across the United States*, NETWORK CONTAGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE (2024), https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report_May-2024.pdf.

¹⁷ *Id.*

¹⁸ *Id.*; see also Press Release, U.S. Dept. of Treasury, Treasury Freezes Assets of Organization Tied to Hamas (February 19, 2006) <https://home.treasury.gov/news/press-releases/js4058>.

¹⁹ See Press Briefing, Press Briefing by Press Secretary Karine Jean-Pierre and National Security Communications Advisor John Kirby (July 25, 2024), <https://www.whitehouse.gov/briefing-room/press-briefings/2024/07/25/press-briefing-by-press-secretary-karine-jean-pierre-and-national-security-communications-advisor-john-kirby-7/>.

²⁰ See Lara L. Burns, *Fueling Chaos: Tracing the Flow of Tax-Exempt Dollars to Antisemitism*, Testimony before the Committee on Ways and Means (July 23, 2024), <https://waysandmeans.house.gov/wp-content/uploads/2024/07/Burns-Testimony.pdf>.

²¹ Poster with ANSWER Coalition's protest partners on file with the Committee.

²² See Catherine A. Theohary, CONG. RESEARCH SERV., R45142, *Information Warfare: Issues for Congress*, (Mar. 5, 2018), <https://sgp.fas.org/crs/natsec/R45142.pdf>.

²³ See Yi-Zheng Lian, *China Has a Vast Influence Machine, and You Don't Even Know It*, N.Y. TIMES (May 21, 2018), <https://www.nytimes.com/2018/05/21/opinion/china-overseas-intelligence-yang.html>.

²⁴ See *Contagious Disruption: How CCP Influence and Radical Ideologies Threaten Critical Infrastructure and Campuses Across the United States*, NETWORK CONTAGION RESEARCH INSTITUTE (2024), https://networkcontagion.us/wp-content/uploads/SID4P-Report_May-2024.pdf.

²⁵ *Id.*

Fund, which sponsors ANSWER and the SID4P Movement.²⁶ Mr. Singham and Ms. Evans are well-known for their efforts to promote radical leftist policies in the U.S. on behalf of China.²⁷ Mr. Singham's influence network is comprised of nonprofits, fiscal sponsors, and news sources, including the CCP-connected BreakThrough Media, which has been the subject of numerous public and private investigations related to foreign agencies.²⁸ Mr. Singham disseminates funding to this shadowy network of organizations, which in turn extends the CCP's influence in the U.S.²⁹

The Committee is concerned with the CCP's growing attempts to influence American policies and that the relationship between the CCP and ANSWER may impact ANSWER's political and advocacy activities, including those relating to the abuse of free speech. As you are aware, such political advocacy activities may require compliance with the Foreign Agents Registration Act (FARA).³⁰ The law clearly states that registration is required for individuals or groups acting on behalf of foreign political or public interests.³¹ In fact, the courts have construed FARA broadly, and it even applies to advocacy through intermediaries.³² FARA registration encompasses groups or individuals acting as public relations counsel, publicity agents, information service employees, and political consultants working in the interests of a foreign principal.³³ Likewise, groups or persons must also register if they solicit, collect, disburse, or dispense funds on behalf of a foreign principal.³⁴ The failure to register is an ongoing offense and is punishable by up to five years imprisonment and fines of up to \$10,000.³⁵

Because of the devastating impacts of ANSWER's July 24 demonstration on NPS land in Washington, D.C., the Committee is keen to better understand ANSWER's efforts to obtain and comply with the NPS public gathering permit, the connection between ANSWER and other nonprofit groups with which it worked to plan the July 24 demonstrations,³⁶ and the flow of funds that enabled the execution of the demonstrations.

To assist the Committee in its ongoing oversight efforts to protect NPS lands from destruction, identify ANSWER's efforts to comply with public gathering permits, and combat foreign influence over American nonprofits and policymaking, please provide the following items in your possession, custody, or control, in electronic format, by November 6, 2024:

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

²⁹ *Id.*

³⁰ 22 U.S.C. § 611 *et seq.*

³¹ 22 U.S.C. § 611(c)(1)(i); *see also Attorney Gen. of the United States v. Irish Northern Aid Committee*, 668 F.2d 159 (2nd Cir. 1982); *Attorney Gen. of the United States v. The Irish People Inc.*, 796 F.2d 520 (D.C. Cir. 1986).

³² 22 U.S.C. § 611(c)(1)(i); *see also Attorney Gen. of the United States v. Irish Northern Aid Committee*, 668 F.2d 159 (2nd Cir. 1982); *Attorney Gen. of the United States v. The Irish People Inc.*, 796 F.2d 520 (D.C. Cir. 1986).

³³ 22 U.S.C. § 611(c)(1)(ii).

³⁴ 22 U.S.C. § 611(c)(1)(iii).

³⁵ 22 U.S.C. § 618(a)(2).

³⁶ The Committee is particularly interested in learning about planning discussions that detailed how ANSWER would work to reduce threats of potential violence given the inflammatory rhetoric used by ANSWER and its allies when soliciting participation in the demonstrations.

1. All documents and communications among or between ANSWER, NPS, U.S. Park Police (USPP), U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), and Metropolitan Police Department (MPD) related to the July 24, 2024, Washington D.C. demonstrations and preparations therefor.
2. All documents and communications among or between ANSWER, NPS, and USPP related to the public gathering permit issued to ANSWER on July 23, 2024.
3. All documents and communications—including but not limited to policies, guidelines, or plans—related to compliance with the provisions of the public gathering permit issued to ANSWER on July 23, 2024.
4. All documents and communications sufficient to show how ANSWER will repay NPS for costs and damages associated with the July 24, 2024, Washington D.C. demonstrations, including but not limited to the more than \$11,000 to repair and clean graffiti on federal property.
5. All documents and communications among or between ANSWER, Brian Becker, Layan Fuleihan, Mara Verheyden-Hilliard, and Carl Messineo related to the July 24, 2024, Washington D.C. demonstrations and preparations therefor.
6. All documents and communications sufficient to show the identities of the at least 200 identifiable marshals ANSWER was required to provide to coordinate the various areas of the July 24, 2024, Washington, D.C. demonstrations.
7. All documents and communications sufficient to show any insurance coverage held by ANSWER during the July 24, 2024, Washington, D.C. demonstrations.
8. All documents and communications sufficient to show why the public gathering permit was approved despite ANSWER refusing to provide specific locations for onsite contacts.
9. All documents and communications sufficient to show why the public gathering permit was approved despite ANSWER failing to provide a site plan as required by event guidelines.
10. All documents and communications among or between ANSWER, Neville Roy Singham, and any other person or group associated with the CCP.
11. All documents and communications among or between ANSWER, Hatem Bazien, and any other person or group associated with Iran or its terrorist proxies, including but not limited to Hamas, Islamic Jihad, and Hezbollah.
12. All documents and communications between ANSWER and any foreign entity or intermediary thereof, related to any payment, financial transaction, transfer, gift, donation, or other monetary contribution to or from ANSWER.
13. All documents and communications sufficient to show ANSWER's registration status and any disclosures made under FARA.

14. All documents and communications between ANSWER and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) related to FARA.
15. Documents and communications sufficient to show any policies or procedures ANSWER has implemented to ensure compliance with FARA, including those related to foreign funds and advocacy on behalf of foreign interests.

An attachment to this letter provides additional instructions for responding to the requests from the Committee on Natural Resources. Please contact the Majority staff for the Oversight and Investigations Subcommittee at (202) 225-2761 or HNRR.Oversight@mail.house.gov with any questions. Under House Rule X, the Committee on Natural Resources has "general oversight" of any matter relating to its jurisdiction, including domestic energy production and environmental policy. Thank you for your cooperation.

Sincerely,



Bruce Westerman
Chairman
Committee on Natural Resources



Paul A. Gosar, D.D.S.
Chairman
Subcommittee on Oversight and Investigations



Cliff Bentz
Member of Congress



Jerry Carl
Member of Congress



Mike Collins
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Pete Stauber
Member of Congress



Daniel Webster
Member of Congress