

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

December 9, 2024

Manolo De Los Santos
Executive Director
The People's Forum
320 W 37th St
New York, NY 10018

Dear Mr. De Los Santos,

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

As you are aware, The People's Forum actively engages in disruptive demonstrations to support a pro-Hamas, anti-Israel, agenda.¹ On July 23, 2024, NPS issued a public gathering permit to ANSWER Coalition (ANSWER) allowing a public demonstration the following day.² The People's Forum advertised the event as a chance to "surround the Capitol" and "arrest Netanyahu."³

The protest quickly devolved into a riot as ANSWER and its partner organizations, including The People's Forum, either encouraged or lost control of the crowd.⁴ Before the sun set, demonstrators burned American flags, assaulted police officers, destroyed federal property, and

¹ See *Statement on Times Square Palestine Protest Held on October 8, 2023*, THE PEOPLE'S FORUM (Oct. 11, 2023), https://peoplesforum.org/blog_post/statement-on-times-square-palestine-protest-held-on-october-8-2023/; see also *A Call for a Global Youth Student Battle in Support of Palestinian Resistance and all Solidarity Forces with It: "From Columbia University to Palestine, Revolutionary Youth Against Zionism and Imperialism"*, THE PEOPLE'S FORUM (Apr. 24, 2024), https://peoplesforum.org/blog_post/arab-maghreb-youth-student-statement/.

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 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-BB1qzmv0#:~:text=At%203%3A17%20p.m.%2C%20the%20United%20States%20Park%20Police.and%20everyone%20was%20ordered%20to%20leave%20the%20area>.

raised foreign flags in place of American flags on federal property.⁵ Rioters also defaced the Columbus Plaza monument and the replica Liberty Bell with pro-Hamas graffiti.⁶ The participants broke nearly every rule of the public gathering permit they had received, leading NPS to ultimately revoke it.⁷

To be clear, the NPS-issued public gathering permit imposed basic but serious requirements for the event. The permit required that “[t]he area should be left in substantially the same condition as it was prior to the activities authorized herein.”⁸ 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.”⁹ 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 §§ 100721-100725.¹⁰

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.”¹¹ NPS, following the arrest of a suspect involved in the protest, estimated the costs of repairing and cleaning the graffiti alone to be over \$11,000.¹²

The People’s Forum’s activities on July 24, 2024, and their engagement in anti-Israel protests across the U.S. targeting college campuses and critical infrastructure are part of the broader “Shut it Down for Palestine” (SID4P) movement,¹³ whose membership roster is comprised of radical anti-Israel organizations.¹⁴ ANSWER’s social media posts in the month preceding the July 24 demonstration list collaborative event partners, which include the Council on American Islamic Relations (CAIR), American Muslims for Palestine (AMP), Code Pink, and The People’s

⁵ 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/>.

⁶ 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>.

⁷ 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/>.

⁸ See U.S. Dept. of the Interior, National Park Service, Public Gathering Permit NCA-NAMA-EVNT24-1278, Issued to ANSWER Coalition on July 23, 2024, for July 24, 2024, on file with the Committee.

⁹ *Id.*

¹⁰ *Id.*

¹¹ *Id.*

¹² 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/>.

¹³ 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/>.

¹⁴ 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-people-s-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, <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).

Forum.¹⁵ 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 like Hamas, Iran, and the Chinese Communist Party (CCP).¹⁶

The People's Forum and its partner organizations under SID4P, 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 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 The People's Forum to protest on July 24, 2024.²¹

Additionally, the Central Intelligence Agency, Federal Bureau of Investigation, and Department of Defense 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 The People's Forum, 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 Fund, which sponsors The People's Forum 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

¹⁵ See *Id.*; See @answercoalition X account, @PeoplesForumNYC, X (July 15, 2024),

<https://x.com/peoplesforumnyc/status/1815760275141714216?s=46>.

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*, *supra* note 17.

²⁵ *Id.*

²⁶ *Id.*

²⁷ *Id.*

²⁸ *Id.*

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 U.S. policies and that the relationship between the CCP and The People's Forum may impact The People's Forum'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 impacts of the July 24 demonstration on NPS land in Washington, D.C., the Committee is keen to better understand SID4P organizations' efforts to comply with the NPS public gathering permit, the connection between The People's Forum and other nonprofit groups that participated in 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 The People's Forum's efforts to comply with public gathering permits, and combat foreign influence over U.S.-based nonprofits and policymaking, please provide the following items in your possession, custody, or control, in electronic format, by December 23, 2024:

1. All documents and communications among or between The People's Forum and ANSWER related to the July 24, 2024, Washington, D.C., demonstrations, including, but not limited to fundraising, logistics, advertising, and organizing.
2. All documents and communications among or between The People's Forum, ANSWER, NPS, U.S. Park Police (USPP), U.S. Capitol Police (USCP), and Metropolitan Police

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 its partners, including The People's Forum, to reduce threats of potential violence given the inflammatory rhetoric used by ANSWER and its partners when soliciting participation in the demonstrations.

Department (MPD) related to the July 24, 2024, Washington, D.C., demonstrations and preparations therefor.

3. All documents and communications among or between The People's Forum, ANSWER, NPS, and USPP related to the public gathering permit issued to ANSWER on July 23, 2024.
4. All documents and communications among or between The People's Forum, Neville Roy Singham, and any other person or group associated with the CCP.
5. All documents and communications among or between The People's Forum, 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.
6. All documents and communications between The People's Forum and any foreign entity or intermediary thereof, related to any payment, financial transaction, transfer, gift, donation, or other monetary contribution to or from The People's Forum.
7. All documents and communications sufficient to show The People's Forum's registration status and any disclosures made under FARA.
8. All documents and communications between The People's Forum and the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) related to FARA.
9. Documents and communications sufficient to show any policies or procedures The People's Forum 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 the National Park Service and federal lands. 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



Mike Collins
Member of Congress



John Curtis
Member of Congress



Russ Fulcher
Member of Congress



Harriet M. Hageman
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Doug LaMalfa
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Doug Lamborn
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Pete Stauber
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