

Spring 2024 U.S. Immigration Alert!

A Newsletter from National Immigrant Solidarity Network

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The World and Activists Demands: Free Palestine! NO Attacks on Palestinian-American Anti-War Activists! Gaza Special Report

In This Issue:

Activists Around the World Demand: An Israeli Cease Fire NOW! U.S. Hands-Off Gaza! Egypt Open the Rafah Crossing NOW ! (Pg 1)

About China-US Solidarity Network (Pg 3)

Israel Has Formed a Task Force to Carry Out Covert Campaigns at US Universities (Pg 4)

Please Support NISN! Subscribe the Newsletter! (Pg 8)

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3/26: Activists Around the World Demand: An Israeli Cease Fire NOW! U.S. Hands-Off Gaza! Egypt Open the Rafah Crossing NOW!

Palestinian-American, Chinese-American and Egyptian activists are together in Cairo for an international humanitarian mission and to fight against the Zionist war machine paid for by the USA

Report from Gaza-Part One

Lee Siu Hin 李小軒

National Coordinator

China-US Solidarity Network

National Immigrant Solidarity Network

As of March 25th over 32,000 Gazans have been killed, at least 74,000 injured; and at least another 8,000 are still missing, believed to be buried under the destroyed buildings. At least 360,000 houses have been destroyed by the Israeli Defense Forces IDF, or we peace activists call them IOF—The Israeli Occupation Forces, in the brutal Gaza invasion since Hamas began “Operation Al-Aqsa Flood” on the October 7, 2023.

Israel's ultimate goal is the total blockade, destruction, genocide and ethnic cleansing of every Palestinian in Gaza. To do this, the IOF are also systematically and deliberately targeting humanitarian convoys that are carrying desperately needed food and medicine. At least a dozen trucks carrying food have been attacked and destroyed and nearly 200 humanitarian workers have been killed as of early March. Several hundred Gazans have also been killed by the IOF while waiting for food, including in the notorious Flour Massacre on February 29th in northern Gaza when over a hundred people were killed by the IOF.

That is, without a doubt, a crime against humanity! Yet the United States, Israel's most important ally and military backer, has intentionally vetoed the past three United Nations (UN) draft resolutions (October 8 and December 8, 2023, and February 20, 2024) calling for a ceasefire and full access to humanitarian aid.

Instead, the U.S. insists that Israel has the "right to defend itself" and has continued to send multi-billion dollars worth of military aid to Israel, including an additional \$14 billion requested by the Biden administration, and quietly approved more than 100 arms sales since October 7th.

By contrast during the same period the U.S. has sent \$180 million, a relatively small token, for the people of Gaza; that's approximately \$1460 for each Israeli just for weapons vs. \$85 in "aid" for each Gazan.

While helping Israel block aid convoys by road, the U.S. responded by launching ineffective and expensive air-drops parachuting 38,000 pallets of Meals Ready-to-Eat (MREs) five months after the assault on Gaza began; tasteless, totally useless military rations sent to Gazans who desperately need real food, water and medicine. The airdrop operation also caused chaos and accidents on the ground, killing at least five people and injuring ten others by these U.S. aid packages dropped from the air, according to the media.

Egypt, bordering with Gaza, is the most important host country to receive the international aid, shipping it by truck into Gaza via the famous Rafah crossing. Because the Egyptian government historically has very close relationships with the U.S. and Israel, they don't want to upset either of them by completely opening the border for international humanitarian operations. Instead, Egypt blocks and even detains international activists who want to challenge the Israeli blockade at the Rafah crossing.

A Call from International Communities

Facing this critical situation the international community drafted a letter to the Egyptian government supporting the international grassroots initiative to send an aid convoy to Gaza through Rafah.

The letter was initiated by the Arab International Centre for Communications and Solidarity (AICCS) and signed by more than 12,500 people from Egypt, other Arab countries and international supporters (including me). It petitioned the Ministry of Foreign Affairs in Egypt to issue "a permit to send an aid convoy to Gaza through Rafah, whereby petitioners and other volunteers will steer and accompany the convoy at their own risk."

AICCS called upon all free people and all Arab and international entities and individuals "to support this initiative by either volunteering to partake in the convoy and/or to express support for this initiative through statements and letters."

A meeting was supposed to be held on March 12th to discuss this with the Ministry but the Ministry canceled the meeting at the last moment without rescheduling.

Obviously, the big imperialist power doesn't want to allow international efforts to break the U.S.-backed Israeli blockade that prevents humanitarian assistance from reaching the people of Gaza fighting for justice. Also, those in Egypt who profit from continuing the blockade, including some international NGOs, would lose out.

However, international activists aren't giving up; there have been many international medical activists from different grassroots Non-Governmental Organizations (NGOs) and humanitarian organizations who have entered Gaza to help people and who have filed factual reports to the world.

One of them is Susan Abulhawa.

Interview with Susan Abulhawa in Cairo, Egypt

Susan Abulhawa is a U.S.-based Palestinian novelist, poet and activist, the executive director of the Palestine Writes Literature Festival and the founder and co-director of Playgrounds for Palestine, an organization to support children. She's been entering Gaza from Cairo, Egypt, with her Egyptian activist friends who have formed a committee to bring humanitarian aid to Gaza since early this year.

We represent China and Chinese-Americans who want to join their humanitarian efforts so we made a special trip to Cairo in mid-March to meet with her.

She explained that what she saw in Gaza was much worse than what we have seen on the U.S. news: "Israel is not just targeting humanitarian organizations and activists. They are targeting all the infrastructure of life. They are making sure that not only are they destroying everything but they are destroying the possibility of rebuilding."

What does she mean by “the centers of life? It is the schools, the hospitals, the community centers. These are generally in every society. All of that stuff has been targeted. All of our cultural centers, the museums and the libraries, the people they have targeted have been the scientists, the doctors, the writers.”

“When you commit a holocaust, when you want to destroy a people, you destroy the brightest among them, you destroy the people who can rebuild the society and who can create a society anew. And those are the people they have targeted.”

We ask her what the grassroots organizations in Egypt locally and internationally have been doing for Gaza. “There're a lot of organizations who want to go into Gaza to help. Unfortunately, Israel has blocked really everyone. There are no [international] journalists in Gaza because Israel is blocking every international media outlet from actually going in and reporting the truth. There are aid organizations who want to go in who cannot. Some medical aid has been going in via delegations of doctors. They go in for a week or two weeks and then they leave.”

Everything is difficult. “They come in with their expertise but they don't have the right equipment to work with ... when 30 out of 36 hospitals are destroyed, and the operating rooms are down to the bare minimum, most what's left don't have reliable electricity.” They don't have enough medication. “They don't have anesthesia ... Israel is banning scissors, so you cannot have medical scissors go into Gaza. So, a lot of things are banned. And even though some medical experts are going in ... what they can do is limited, and also it depends on what part of Gaza. So, in the north of Gaza, nothing really is getting in.”

At the end of the interview, she had a special message to China, and how China can support Palestine. “China is a really important geopolitical player in the world. And so far, it has been mostly quiet. They vote the right way at the U.N., and some of the statements they make are great but we need China not just to be working towards becoming an economic powerhouse, but China has a chance to become, not just an economic and political force, but a moral force. And this, this is the time to do that, for China to become these things.”

After the interview, we went to the wholesale district at Cairo's city center to purchase the lists of humanitarian items to take into Gaza for their upcoming trip. Mostly basic, everyday items, such as: running shoes, shibshib (sandals), batteries, books, notepads, over-the-counter medicines, coffee. The most expensive item is a video projector with a portable solar power generator so they can show videos to the kids.

What Are We Going to Do Next?

The U.S. imperialist policy in the Middle East will not change. It will continue to back the Zionist state, continue to destroy Palestine and continue to destabilize the region. Regardless who wins the U.S. election in November, Biden or Trump, the IOF invasion and occupation of Gaza and other Palestinian lands won't end -- the injustice has already continued for the past 70 years.

We're actively working with international and local organizations, repressing peace loving Chinese people and Chinese-Americans, collecting medical donations to enter Gaza for our humanitarian mission soon. We want to see an end to the suffering of the people in Gaza and to bring much needed food and medical assistance. We're going to continue to fight for peace and justice; we are going to continue to fight for our better future. We're calling for a Free Palestine!

About China-US Solidarity Network

www.ChinaSolidarity.org

<https://immigrantsolidarity.org/ChinaSolidarity/index.html>

Building Bridge Between China-U.S. Community Friendships

Founded in 2016, an non-profit organization based in Los Angeles, CA.

Mission: Building bridge between China and US, unite diverse scholars, journalists, youths, professional & progressive organizations and community activists from both countries for exchange networks. Aim to address core issues concern for both countries, using online tools, face-to-face conferences, international study tours, academic think tanks building, and joint-university research projects.

Projects: For the past ten years, over hundred events between China and US with thousands of people had attended. Include: China fact-finding tours, Xinjiang fact-finding tours, China and US research projects, “Capitalism on a Ventilator” book project, “Vaccine and Sanctions” documentary project, “Voice of Xinjiang Voice XJ”, documentary project, “Xinjiang

to Gaza” education project.

Contact Us: ActivistWeb@gmail.com

3/23: Israel Has Formed a Task Force to Carry Out Covert Campaigns at US Universities

A major Israeli news site says Israel’s foreign affairs and diaspora affairs ministries are behind the operation.

William I. Robinson-TRUTHOUT

As worldwide protest escalates over Israel’s genocide of Palestinians in Gaza, academic freedom and free speech are under all-out attack on university campuses in the United States, not just from university administrations and pro-Israeli groups, but now directly from the highest levels of the Israeli state. In a story that has been largely ignored in the Western press, the Israeli news website Ynetnews, one of the largest media outlets in the country, reported that the Israeli government has launched what appears to be a wide-ranging covert campaign to harass and intimidate students, faculty, and administrators into silence.

According to the report, the Foreign Affairs and the Diaspora Affairs ministries have established a task force to carry out “shaming and pressuring” operations at U.S. universities. The task force, chaired by Foreign Minister Eli Cohen and led by senior government officials, drew up a multifaceted “action plan,” according to Ynetnews, involving political and psychological operations against its critics.

The plan aims at “inflicting economic and employment consequences on antisemitic [read: pro-Palestinian/anti-genocide] students and compelling universities to distance them from their campuses.” The plan specifies that actions taken “should not have the signature of the State of Israel on it.”

The first plank in the plan is described as the “consciousness axis.” It calls for “personal, economic and employment repercussions for the distributors of antisemitism.”

According to the plan, the inter-ministerial task force will carry out “naming and shaming” by “publicizing the names of those generating antisemitism on campuses — both students and faculty and impacting the employment of those identified as the perpetrators of antisemitism.” Those targeted “will struggle to find employment in the U.S. and will pay a significant economic price for their conduct.”

The plan specifies that “the Foreign Ministry and [Israeli] representatives in the U.S. are in contact with professional unions to recruit them to act against antisemitism and exert pressure on university heads.” It notes that pressuring employers to blacklist pro-Palestinian students “has already happened in major law firms in the U.S.,” and that “if a university knows that the chances of its students finding employment have decreased, the university administration will act against those antisemitic students to avoid harming the university’s ranking.”

In the most high-impact instances of this plan of action, the presidents of Harvard University (Claudine Gay) and the University of Pennsylvania (Elizabeth Magill) were both forced to resign in early 2024 and late 2023, respectively — not because they opposed the Israeli-perpetrated genocide or came out in support of Palestinian lives but because, in defense of free speech, they did not crack down hard enough on Palestine solidarity actions on their campuses.

Such censorship has swept university campuses across the U.S. and some professors have even lost their jobs. Among other cases, a professor at Texas Tech University was suspended in early March for his pro-Palestine social media posts, and a tenured professor of political science at Indiana University was barred from teaching in January because he booked a room for a pro-Palestinian activity.

Off campus, there has been a wave of repression by corporations against employees who have posted their opposition to the genocide on social media, and Truthout has previously reported on retaliation by law firms against their employees and recruits. Artists have had their exhibitions canceled for merely posting pro-Palestinian messages on their social media and authors have had their book talks suspended for signing petitions against the genocide.

Such silencing incidents are now commonplace across the U.S.

Under the heading “Legal Axis,” the Israeli government plan calls for “taking legal action outside the law [what ‘outside the law’ means exactly is not specified in the Ynet article] against activities and organizations that pose a threat to Jewish and Israeli students on campuses, such as Students for Justice in Palestine.”

It adds that “Israel will hold discussions with elements from the U.S. Department of Justice to map out legal tools that can be used.” The suspension in December by Columbia University of the campus chapters of Jewish Voice for Peace and Students for Justice in Palestine was the most well-publicized case, but such crackdowns on pro-Palestinian student activism have taken place at many universities.

On my own campus, the University of California at Santa Barbara, the administration recently indefinitely closed the Multicultural Center (MCC) and threatened to sanction pro-Palestinian students. The MCC had put up a signage where students had written messages against Zionism and the Israeli-perpetrated genocide in Gaza, in solidarity with the Palestinian freedom struggle, and in opposition to the university administration’s pro-Israel tilt and refusal to condemn the genocide.

“The signage has been removed and campus is conducting a bias incident review based on potential discrimination related to protected categories that include religion, citizenship, and national or ethnic origin,” stated Chancellor Henry Yang in a February 27 university-wide email. “The posting of such messages is a violation of our principles of community and inclusion.” But many faculty do not agree with the chancellor’s characterization of Palestine solidarity as discrimination.

“The MCC has been a critical site for naming and resisting intersectional injustice in our campus community and around the globe,” read a statement released by the Department of Black Studies lambasting the closure. “As such, it is aligned with so much of what we do in our teaching, scholarship, university service, and broader praxes of decolonization.

The MCC’s temporary closure deprives multiple campus communities of a public intellectual space in an increasingly hostile and restricted academic environment.”

Under the heading “Economic Axis,” Tel Aviv’s action plan states that “Israel will identify leading donors within the Jewish and Israeli communities and enlist them in the struggle to serve as a lever of pressure on university heads to act against antisemitism.”

It continues: “Israel will exert pressure on Jewish and non-Jewish donors to withdraw their investments from campuses where antisemitism is not addressed and promote economic sanctions against universities receiving federal or state public funding for non-addressing antisemitism on campuses.” In the Harvard case, in fact, wealthy donors withdrew hundreds of millions of dollars in donations to the university’s endowment to pressure the administration to crack down on pro-Palestinian solidarity.

Finally, the “explanatory axis” involves “creating a toolbox available to pro-Israeli professors and students, assisting them in addressing claims against the pro-Israel side physically and especially on social networks. The Foreign Ministry will explore the option of launching a campaign on social networks focused on campuses.”

This element of the action plan is not new. Training professors and students to repress pro-Palestinian sentiment on their campuses has been taking place for many years. Among other programs, Hasbara Fellowships — hasbara is the Hebrew word for public diplomacy, that is, propaganda — are offered to Jewish students at U.S. university campuses to travel to Israel, where they are indoctrinated into Zionism and taught how to practice hasbara when they return home.

Hasbara offices are maintained in several Israeli ministries, including the ministries of Foreign Affairs, Diaspora Affairs, Strategic Affairs and the Israel Defense Forces (IDF). The press office of the Israeli embassy in Washington, D.C., did not respond to Truthout’s request for comment on the action plan.

The Criminalization of Palestine Solidarity

The worldwide campaign in support of the Palestinian freedom struggle has taken off in recent years, spurred on by growing international awareness of Israel’s systematic violation of Palestinian human rights and international law, ethnic cleansing, brutal occupation of Palestinian lands, and systems of settler colonialism and apartheid — all with U.S. government and transnational corporate complicity.

The genocide in Gaza has shocked the world community, sparking an unprecedented outcry and upsurge of protest. Israel may control the military battlefield, but it appears to have already lost the political battlefield of world public opinion. It is this crisis of legitimacy of the Zionist narrative that is leading the Israeli government to undertake a desperate escalation of its attacks on U.S. university campuses as laid out in the action plan.

What is known as the Israel lobby consists of a network of individuals and organizations aligned with the Israeli government that actively works to stifle any criticism of Israel (or U.S. support for it), and to silence any mention of Palestinian rights. It is the most powerful political lobby in the United States bar none, in a category unto itself.

The network of organizations and individuals that participate in the lobby are embedded into the U.S. political system, public institutions, the corporate world and civil society. Unlike other legislative lobbies that ply the halls of power in Washington, the Israel lobby operates throughout the U.S., in both public and private spheres.

Organizations such as the American Israeli Political Affairs Committee (AIPAC) directly finance political campaigns for office at the federal, state and local levels. AIPAC is expected to spend a whopping \$100 million in this year's general elections to oust progressive candidates and to back those that support the Zionist agenda. (Remarkably, AIPAC is not required by the U.S. government to register as the agent of a foreign government.)

In recent years, ground zero for the Palestine solidarity movement in the U.S. has been college and university campuses. While some of the lobby organizations operate throughout U.S. society, such as the Anti-Defamation League, AIPAC and StandWithUs, there are a number of groups specifically set up to operate on U.S. university campuses — among them The David Project, AMCHA Initiative, Canary Mission, the Israel on Campus Coalition, and Students Supporting Israel. These organizations have systematically targeted for persecution scholars, academics, and students who speak out on and off campuses against Israeli policies and for Palestinian rights.

As Maryam Griffin and I showed in our 2017 book, *We Will Not Be Silenced: The Academic Repression of Israel's Critics*, scholars have been turned away from jobs, denied tenure and promotion, rejected for funding, expelled from institutions, maligned and vilified. Student organizations have faced harassment and sanctions. Individual students have been threatened with expulsion. Some have even been criminally investigated and prosecuted.

The playbook of tactics employed by the Israel lobby include character assassination, selective misquotation, the willful distortion of the record, the fabrication of falsehoods and a complete disregard for the truth, gaslighting, blacklisting targeted individuals, political and economic blackmail, and even threats of violence. Administrators are pressured and sometimes even blackmailed with a cutoff of financial donations by wealthy Zionist donors to censor and discipline the offending party, while politicians are lobbied to apply pressure on university officials. Zionist academics, administrators and politicians are often themselves part of these campaigns.

I myself was subject to a six-month long campaign in 2009 to have me dismissed from the University of California at Santa Barbara after I publicly denounced on my campus "Operation Cast Lead," a massive 22-day assault of Gaza carried out from late 2008 to early 2009 that left thousands of Palestinians dead and injured. The then-director of the Anti-Defamation League, Abraham Foxman, flew from Washington to Santa Barbara specifically to meet with my chancellor, deans, and Zionist faculty members and demand from them that I be fired. (Five years later, in 2014, I published in *Truthout* an exposé of the campaign against me.)

Anti-Zionism Is Not Antisemitism

The Zionist narrative routinely condemns solidarity with Palestine as "antisemitism." This conflation of anti-Zionism with antisemitism lays at the heart of Israeli hasbara and political persecution of the Palestine solidarity movement. Israel has made the definition of antisemitism an international political battleground in its efforts to suppress condemnation of its repression of the Palestinians, its ongoing violations of international laws and conventions, and Jewish supremacy inscribed into the legal and political structure of the Israeli state.

The claim may be a crude attempt to delegitimize solidarity with Palestinians and to rationalize intimidation and repression by the lobby, but it has nonetheless gained traction as a result of the support it has received from the U.S. Departments of State and Justice.

Antisemitism is historically considered to be discrimination against or prejudice and hatred of Jews, which would have nothing to do with the critique of Zionism and of a state based explicitly on racism and Jewish supremacy any more than a critique of anti-Black racism and white supremacy is "anti-white."

The State Department revised its definition of antisemitism in the early 2000s to include "denying the Jewish people their right to self-determination, e.g., by claiming that the existence of the State of Israel is a racist endeavor," "drawing comparisons of contemporary Israeli policy to that of the Nazis," and "blaming Israel for all inter-religious or political tension."

In turn, Zionist activists and lobby organizations draw on the State Department's "new definition" to silence those who criticize Israeli state practices and come out in support of Palestinian freedom by labeling them ipso facto "antisemitic."

The charge of antisemitism is intended to have a chilling effect — and indeed, journalists, politicians, academics, even activists, are intimidated into self-censorship out of fear of losing employment and their reputation or of facing other sanctions. Jewish Voice for Peace has documented and condemned this manipulation of antisemitism, highlighting in particular “bullying inside the Jewish community” against the increasing number of Jews on and off campus who have come out against Israeli apartheid and occupation and in favor of the global boycott, divestment and sanctions movement.

The hasbara propaganda machinery has turned comparisons between Zionism and Nazism into a taboo, yet the comparison is historically and analytically important.

In my 2014 article in Truthout, I noted, “Zionists and defenders of the Israeli state take great offense at this analogy between the Nazis and Israeli state actions, including the charge of genocide, in part, because the Jewish Holocaust is used by the Israeli state and the Zionist political project as a mechanism of legitimation, so that to draw such analogies is to undermine Israel’s legitimating discourse. It is crucial to point this out, because that discourse legitimates genocide at the present time.”

While Judaism is a religion of universal values, Zionism is a right-wing nationalist ideology that emerged from the wave of racial nationalism that swept Europe in the late 19th century, part of the same movement that gave rise to Nazism in Germany and Manifest Destiny in the U.S., and more recently to a resurgent white nationalism.

Racial nationalism argued that all people belong to one or another “racially pure” groups that can be traced back to mythical origins that correspond to “racially pure” people/nations, and that each people/nation must have its own “racially pure” homeland. Racial nationalist campaigns of “blood and soil” set out to organize the world according to this ideology.

The Zionist program legitimated its conquest of Palestine through ethnic cleansing and settler colonialism by converting a faith community among diverse cultures, places and histories into a “racially pure” Jewish people/nation who must return to their ancestral homeland.

In this endeavor the Zionist movement engages in a form of profound trauma manipulation in which Jewish grief and memory of the Holocaust are weaponized. In order for Jews to be swept up into Zionism, they must be made to feel that there is an existential threat from which they can only be protected by uncritical defense of Israel, even if this means support for genocide.

Palestinians must be dehumanized if the endeavor is to succeed and Israel’s critics must be criminalized. This Zionist strategy has generated since the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 a significant mass constituency among Jews in the U.S.

However, before that constituency could be brought into existence, anti-Zionist Jewish voices had to be marginalized and repressed. Albert Einstein, then living in exile in the U.S., was offered the presidency of Israel upon its creation in 1948 but turned it down, instead characterizing the new state as fascist. He joined 27 of the most prominent Jewish intellectual, public and religious leaders at the time, including Hannah Arendt, Rabbi Jessurun Cardozo and Sidney Lens, in a letter to The New York Times, warning that:

Within the Jewish community the Zionists have preached an admixture of ultranationalism, religious mysticism, and racial superiority. Like other Fascist parties they have been used to break strikes, and have themselves pressed for the destruction of free trade unions. [The Zionists in Palestine] inaugurated a reign of terror. Teachers were beaten up for speaking against them, adults were shot for not letting their children join them.

This is why the Zionist hasbara in the U.S. has not been directed solely at non-Jewish supporters of Palestinian freedom. It has also been directed at the Jewish American community.

The Zionist ideology and the resultant steadfast support for Israel gained hegemony among this community over the decades, and formed a key mass constituency for the Israel lobby. (Another major constituency are far right Christian fundamentalists who believe a new Jewish kingdom must be consolidated before it can then be destroyed so that the Christian Messiah can return.) But in recent years, anti-Zionist Jews, especially among Jewish youth, have taken the lead in fighting against Zionism and for Palestinian rights.

Jewish Voice for Peace — the largest anti-Zionist organization in the world — along with Never Again Action, the American Council for Judaism, and other anti-Zionist Jewish organizations, have been at the forefront of the current mass movement against the genocide. This also helps explain why the Israeli government action plan targets anti-Zionist Jews as much as it does other anti-genocide activists.

Now is the time for social justice activists to step up their resistance. The Israeli government would not have bothered to develop its action plan were the mass movement not having a mounting impact on the U.S. and the world stage in turning the political tide against the genocidists.

The action plan makes clear that wresting the public narrative from these genocidists and their Western backers is as important as the balance of forces in the streets. At stake, along with the defense of Palestinian lives, is the very existence of academic freedom and free speech.

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About National Immigrant Solidarity Network

NISN is a coalition of community, immigrant, labor, human rights and student activist groups, founded in 2002 in response to the urgent needs for the national coalition to fight immigrant bashing, support immigrant rights, no to the sweatshops exploitation and end to the racism on the community. Please visit our website:
<http://www.ImmigrantSolidarity.org>

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