

RISING ANTISEMITISM: JEWISH LEADERS EXPRESS DEEP CONCERN

A Call for Action, Awareness, and Allyship

To Elected and Civic Leaders in the Greater Seattle Area,

The recent intense period of violence in Israel, the West Bank and Gaza, and the devastating loss of innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives has been both sad and emotionally exhausting. Alarming, for our local Jewish community here in Seattle, there has been a disturbing increase in anti-Israel sentiment and antisemitism.

The Anti-Defamation League released data demonstrating this increase, including more than **17,000 tweets** using variations of the phrase, "Hitler was right" between May 7 and May 14. Jews were identified, then beaten at a Los Angeles restaurant on May 18. Pro-Palestinian protesters verbally assaulted and threw fireworks at individuals in a heavily Jewish neighborhood in New York City, and here in Seattle, Jews standing in support of Israel were labeled "White Supremacists."

Our local Jewish community knows all too well how conflict in the Middle East can fuel antisemitism. The perpetrator of the 2006 hate crime at the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle, who killed one staff person and seriously injured five more, was motivated by anger about a conflict between Israel and Hezbollah. The recent violence in the Middle East increased tension and fear locally and motivated Jewish organizations across the Puget Sound Region to implement additional safety measures - because we know what consequences are possible. We also know that we are not alone in this.

Irresponsible and ill-informed rhetoric perpetuates hate against both Jews and Muslims who are too often falsely held accountable for an ongoing conflict on the other side of the world. The conflict between Israel and the Palestinians is complex and cannot be reduced to simple accusations. Nor can the relationship between the Jewish diaspora - particularly here in Washington State - and Israel, be easily defined. We need our leaders to be mindful of and take responsibility for the very real consequences of their rhetoric.

Antisemitism is pernicious and at its highest level in decades. In recent years, it has increasingly moved from the fringes of society into mainstream public discourse. From microaggressions to physical violence, from Charlottesville to the Tree of Life Synagogue in Pittsburgh, antisemitism permeates the lives of American Jews. The 2020 Pew study found that three-quarters of U.S. Jews say there is more antisemitism in the country today than there was five years ago, and over half reported experiencing some form of antisemitism in the last year.

Times like these are both painful and fear-inducing for American Jews. We need allyship, solidarity, and support. We need to feel safe in classrooms, the workplace, and in our homes. We extend this same hand to people of all faiths and identities who may also be targeted at this time. Please reach out to the Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) of the Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle. The JCRC can connect you with local organizations and resources to foster understanding and engage in meaningful dialogue about the multifaceted, pervasive nature of antisemitism, the complexities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and the ways in which the two intersect. Use your position of leadership to help ensure the safety of our local Jewish community.

Respectfully,

ORGANIZATIONS

American Jewish Committee Seattle
Anti-Defamation League's Pacific Northwest Office
Bet Alef Meditative Synagogue
Bet Chaverim Synagogue
Bet Shira
Bikur Cholim Machzikay Hadath
Camp Solomon Schechter
Congregation Beth Shalom
Congregation Ezra Bessaroth
Doing Good To All dba Beit HaLevy
Hebrew Free Loan Association of Washington State
Herzl-Ner Tamid Conservative Congregation
Hillel at the University of Washington
Jewish Community Relations Council of Greater Seattle
Jewish Family Service
Jewish Federation of Greater Seattle
Kavana

Kline Galland
Kol Ami: A Center for Jewish Life
Mercaz Seattle
Minyan Ohr Chadash
New Israel Fund (NIF)
Samis Foundation
Seattle Hadassah
Seattle Hebrew Academy
Seattle Tribe Motorcycle Club
Sephardic Bikur Holim Congregation
StandWithUs Northwest
Stroum Jewish Community Center
Temple B'nai Torah
Temple Beth Am
Temple De Hirsch Sinai
URJ Camp Kalsman
Vaad HaRabanim of Greater Seattle

The above organizations represent thousands of members of our Jewish community. For a full list of individual signatories, including dozens of faith leaders, see our website at: jewishinseattle.org/openletter

JEWISH ELECTEDS

Washington State Senator Reuven Carlyle, 36th District
Washington State Representative Roger Goodman, 45th District
Washington State Representative Gerry Pollet, 46th District
Washington State Representative Tana Senn, 41st District
Washington State Senator Lisa Wellman, 41st District