

**The Durham City Council:
Discrimination by Fast-Tracking and the Lack of Transparency**

On April 3, 2018 a group of known anti-Israel petitioners wrote the City Council asking that their petition be put immediately on the April 5 work session agenda (1). Using his personal Gmail account, Mayor Schewel replied to City Manager Thomas Bonfield, “I...told them [even though] they are late in signing up...to call the clerk now and sign up.” (2)

In so doing so, the Mayor ignored Council policy, which clearly states speakers must sign up “ten calendar days prior to the City Council Work Session meeting at which you wish to speak.” (3)

On April 5, Beth Bruch, one of the petitioners and a donor to council person Jillian Johnson, benefiting from the rules being waived, spoke first at the work session, saying to the City Council, “We know Israel is the last country in the world to respect human rights.”

Twelve hours before the April 5 work session was even set to begin, Mayor Schewel sent City Manager Bonfield and every member of the City Council his self-authored “Statement on policing from the Durham City Council.” Schewel sent the council statement from his personal email account to the personal email accounts of Bonfield and all city council members (4), thus keeping the statement out of the eyes of the media, which regularly monitor city council emails. Mayor Schewel did not consult with the mainstream Jewish Community on his wording and later told us that no word could be changed because the Council members would not allow it.

Thus, Mayor Schewel wrote policy that discriminated against Israel and Jews without allowing even a single minute of public discussion and without including the mainstream Jewish community.

At a later date, I made a public records request for city council-related emails that reside in DeDreana Freeman’s personal email account. Juliet Black, Executive Assistant in the Office of the Mayor and Council, wrote to the City Clerk in response to my request, “please note Council Freeman wants all of the emails blackened out.” That is concerning. (5)

Charlie Reece wrote to the City Attorney, Patrick Baker, “I have received a public records request for certain email messages sent and received from my personal Gmail account. Just over 1,300 emails are responsive to the request.” (6)

It is clear that Durham City Council were fast tracking anti-Israel policy behind the veil of personal email accounts.

In this manner, the Durham City Council hastily initiated, supported and sponsored a “Statement” that adhered only to wishes of a national and local organization that despises Israel. The Durham City Council broke their own scheduling policy and used personal email accounts to cloak their actions against Israel and the Jewish community. By doing so, the council initiated a government act that has led to our sense of alienation and discrimination in this community.

(1) The letter indicating the value placed by the petitioners on haste and repeats the unsubstantiated and defaming lies:

Timeline for Demilitarize! Durham2Palestine Resolution

Gabriel [gabriel.baldasare@gmail.com]

Sent Tuesday, April 03, 2018 3:15 PM

To: Council Members

Date: April 3, 2018

Dear Durham City Council and Mayor Schewel,

We, the undersigned, write to express our sense of urgency that Durham take a moral stand against militarization and violence. We are horrified by Israel's deadly response to peaceful mass protests in Gaza last Friday, including the deployment of 100 snipers and drones dropping tear gas canisters as well as the firing of rubber-coated steel bullets and live ammunition into crowds of Palestinian civilians, killing 18 and wounding more than 700. Our coalition and the many community members who support our effort feel it is critical for Durham to approve our resolution prohibiting Durham police from participating in training exchanges with Israel.

We are also well aware of the continued effects of the militarization of police departments on Black and Brown communities, as evidenced by the March 18, 2018 shooting of Saiphon Clark in his grandmother's backyard by police officers in Sacramento.

This is why many people have planned to take time out of their day to show up to the afternoon council work session [this Thursday, April 5, 2018](#) to tell you why we feel so strongly that this resolution be passed as soon as possible. Our communications with Mayor Schewel had led us to believe that the resolution would be on this Thursday's agenda and likely voted on at the [Monday night](#) meeting 10 days later. Yet we have discovered that the resolution is not on the agenda. If it is not introduced until the next council work session, it would not be voted on [until May 7th](#) at the earliest.

Students from three universities are key participants in this effort and will be leaving campus in early May. We know and appreciate the fact that all council members have signed our petition or otherwise gone on record opposing these exchanges and there does not appear to be disagreement among the council members on this issue. In addition, given recent events in Gaza, we believe it is crucial that this resolution be introduced this month. To delay would be a disservice to the people of Durham.

As a result, we ask that the resolution be put on the [April 5th](#) work session agenda.

Signed,

Gabriel Baldasare

Ajama Dillabour

Noah Rubin-Rhoads

Elyse Crystal

Beth Bruch

Lee Montmar

Erif Mehayir

Ahmad Amireh

Mina Ezikpe

Lara Haft

Allyah Salame

Erica Keif

Sandra Kern

Jake Stanley

Ihab Mucati

Tom Stern

Jazmyne Williams

Donna Hicks

Demilitarize! Durham2Palestine coalition members

(2)The letter from the Mayor's personal email account (doing public business) indicating the mayor's agreeing to the haste and changing the rules to accommodate:

: Steve Schewel <steveschewel@gmail.com>

Subject: Re: FYI: Training from Israeli security forces

Date: April 2, 2018 at 7:13:54 AM EDT

To: Bonfield, Thomas <Thomas.Bonfield@durhamnc.gov>
Cc: Wallace, Karmisha <Karmisha.Wallace@durhamnc.gov>

Tom,

I have been taking the temperature of individual council members on this issue during the past week. The only person I have not talked to yet is Vernetta, and I hope to talk to her today. The council members are giving it careful thought.

I think the best way to handle the Demilitarize Durham group is to have them come to the work session and speak in an orderly way at our citizen comment period. I have reached out to them, told them they are late in signing up, told them to call the clerk now and sign up. They want to present a petition, and I think that is the best way to do it.

Let's touch base on this today, in person or over the phone. I'll be around city hall today in the late morning. I have some thoughts about this I'd like to share with you.

(3)

**REQUEST TO APPEAR BEFORE
THE DURHAM CITY COUNCIL
AT THE WORK SESSION**

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Council Work Session Meeting Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Name: _____

Address: _____

Email address: _____

Phone number: _____ Fax number: _____

Organization Represented (if any): _____

Topic: Statement of presentation you wish to make and Statement of action you wish Council to take. *(Attach additional sheets if necessary)*

Have you communicated with the Department Director associated with this matter?

Yes or No! If yes, what was the outcome? _____

Presentation: Will you be presenting a power point presentation or a video?

Yes or No: *If you have a presentation, please bring your DVD or Flash Drive on the day of the Work Session and see a city staff member at the Staff's Table.*

***Please note that you are permitted 3 minutes to speak and make your presentation.**

Signature _____

This form must be returned to the Agenda Coordinator by **Monday at 5:00 pm** ten calendar days prior to the City Council Work Session meeting at which you wish to speak. Once this form is submitted, no further reminder will be given. Citizens may call the Agenda Coordinator's Office at 560-4222 to confirm receipt of this form.

Please send this form to: Agenda Coordinator
City of Durham, NC

(4) Three emails sent by Mayor Schewel to Bonfield and City Council members from Schewel's personal email.



Thomas Bonfield

To: Bonfield, Thomas

Fwd: Statement from council re Israel

Tom,

Begin forwarded message:

From: Steve Schewel <steveschewel@gmail.com>
Date: April 5, 2018 at 12:58:23 AM EDT
To: Tom Bonfield <tbonfield@gmail.com>
Subject: Statement from council re Israel

Tom,
I have attached here the statement I am going to introduce tomorrow during the Announcements at work session.

Best wishes,
Steve

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Steve Schewel
Mayor, City of Durham

101 City Hall Plaza
Durham, NC 27701

(919) 560-4333
steve.schewel@durhamnc.gov

See two attachments re response to petition concerning israel

Steve Schewel <steveschewel@gmail.com>

Thu 4/5/2018 12:54 AM

To: DeDreana Freeman <equitableequality@gmail.com>; Jillian Johnson <jillylovesdurham@gmail.com>; Mark-Anthony Middleton <middletonma@hotmail.com>;

📎 2 attachments (321 KB)

Chief Davis memo.jpeg, Statement on policing from the Durham City Council.docx

DeDreana, Jillian and Mark-Anthony,

Please see two attachments prior to the work session.

First is Chief Davis memo to Tom Bonfield.

Second is a statement I have written and will introduce today during the Announcements section of the work session. I have labored long and hard over it and I hope it meets your approval. [My plan is to introduce it at the work session and put it on the agenda for council approval on April 16.](#) I am sure the public will want to discuss it then.

Thanks to all of you for your one-on-one discussions this past week.

Best wishes,
Steve

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Steve Schewel
Mayor, City of Durham



Charlie Reece <charlierece@gmail.com>

See two attachments re response to petition re israel

3 messages

Steve Schewel <steveschewel@gmail.com>

Thu, Apr 5, 2018 at 12:56 AM

To: Vernetta Alston <vernetta.alston@gmail.com>, Charlie Reece <charlierece@gmail.com>, Javiera Caballero <ajvcaballero@yahoo.com>

Dear Vernetta, Charlie and Javiera,

Please see two attachments prior to the work session.

First is Chief Davis' memo to Tom Bonfield.

Second is a statement I have written and will introduce today during the Announcements section of the work session. I have labored long and hard over it and I hope it meets your approval. My plan is to introduce it at the work session and put it on the agenda for council approval on April 16. I am sure the public will want to discuss it then.

Thanks to all of you for your one-on-one discussions this past week.

Best wishes,
Steve

--
Steve Schewel
Mayor, City of Durham

101 City Hall Plaza
Durham, NC 27701

(919) 560-4333
stve.schewel@durhamnc.gov

2 attachments

(5) Council Person Freeman and the public record

From: Black, Juliet

Sent: Tuesday, May 15, 2018 8:53:25 AM

To: Schreiber, Diana

Cc: Freeman, DeDreana; Black, Juliet

Subject: RE: Public Record Requests- Reitzes

Diana, I will bring you the emails from **Public Request #4104536** today, please note Council Freeman wants all of the emails blackened out. Per our conversation on yesterday, 5/15/18 – between the hours of 10 amnoon, you stated you would handle this request.

From my understanding in the email below, once you receive the final okay from Legal, you will distribute the information to Mr. Reitzes via Dropbox, once TS (Dave) train you.

If I misstated anything, please verify,

to assure we are on the same page.

Thank you.

(6) Councilman Reece noted that he had 1300 emails in his personal email that “are responsive” to the request for relevant council business

From: Reece, Charlie
Sent: Tuesday, May 15, 2018 4:34:26 PM
To: Goode, Kerry
Cc: Baker, Patrick
Subject: Help with email archive

Dear Kerry,

I have received a public records request for certain email messages sent and received from my personal Gmail account. Just over 1,300 emails are responsive to the request, so I exported them from Gmail in .mbox format. The result is a .mbox file which is 211MB in size.

Can you or someone from your department help me convert this file into a format that might be suitable for providing to the individual who requested these emails? I'm not sure what that would look like – maybe there's software that would allow us to take the .mbox file and use it to generate PDFs of each email thread along with PDFs of any attachments? I'm not sure where to go from here.

Thanks,
Charlie Reece
Member. Durham City Council

Respectfully Presented to the Human Relations Commission
Peter Reitzes, June 5, 2018

