

INTRODUCTORY SUMMARY...Robert Gutman

On April 16, the Durham City Council unanimously endorsed a statement imposing a total ban on police exchanges with only one country in the world: the Jewish nation of Israel. The result in my minority community was, for many, a painful discriminatory experience and for some, an experience echoing blood libels of the past. We will convey to this body with supplemental written a number of facts to support our assertions. We also understand that you may not have a sense of why defaming Israel as a whole is painful to us. We understand that the majority of us do not look like a "minority" to the Council or to the Commission. But we all understand that it is only a minority that can truly judge discrimination against itself. You will hear testimony on that.

In making the decision to allow the Petition that led to the Statement, the Council threw all care and due diligence to the wind, made no effort to examine the libel they were fed about Israel judgement to the wind, did not ask us to read the Mayor's draft although it was reviewed by the petitioners. The Council members responded personally and welcoming to the petitioners, assured them that the draft would be passed, pretended to take our 60 minutes of presentations seriously deep concerns serious, ignored the report of its own Chief of Police and another and then singled out Israel for special boycott creating a toxic atmosphere in the community, so toxic that a speaker felt no qualms to express blatant anti-Semitism and to apparently stimulate a wave of Anti-Semitic flyers in the community. Defaming Israel was and is the goal of the petitioners and now, to our great distress are boasting that they succeeded.

Right before the vote, Rabbi Zalman Bluming pleaded with the City Council not to discriminate against Israel and Jews. He told a packed City Hall, "My phone has been ringing non-stop over the last week, [from] young adults that live here that feel unsafe, that feel marginalized, that feel as if for some reason they've been singled out."

After hearing and reading our other presentations and seeing our evidence, we are sure you will understand the hurt, fear, and discomfort we feel and better understand how close this comes to outright anti-Semitism. We ask that you issue a statement of findings indicating that the Committee understands that this was, and is, an act of governmental discrimination. Further we ask that you petition, or perhaps instruct the City Council to reconsider its refusal of our repeated documented requests to withdraw the current wording; and issue in its place, a far more direct and simple document, if one is needed at all, since instructing personnel is not usually done this way at all.

In Brief, these are some of the main actions that led to the discrimination:

- The original petition claimed that Israel was training police to "terrorize Black and Brown Communities in the United States." There is no evidence for that whatsoever and our own police chief specifically denied that claim
- The original petition was written with several City Council members BEFORE it came before the Council.
- The Mayor wrote the Statement BEFORE a single minute of public hearings. There was no sign that any of the Council had any intent to change the offending and unnecessary wording
- The Statement misrepresented Chief CJ Davis' memo on Israel.
- Singling out Israel meets the Statement Department definition of "anti-Semitism."
- Extensive Public Records Requests reveal that the City Council used personal email accounts to communicate on this issue thus avoiding the usual media surveillance to which actions of the Council are, by policy, supposed to subject. One council member even asked for her requested emails to be blackened out so they could not be read.
- We have suffered discrimination at the hands of a government, not just another group of citizens. The original petition intended that injury. The Mayor crafted a statement that singled out Israel with no evidence, thus fulfilling the intent of the original petition.