

Durham Human Relations
Commission Golden Belt Office
Center
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Durham, NC 27701

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Dear Members of the Human Relations Commission:

This letter answers a specific question before the Commission on how the recent Durham City Council actions and ultimate statement involving Israel relate to established definitions of anti-Semitism and why mainstream Jewish organizations representing the overwhelming majority of Jewish people residing in Durham and the region also see this statement as extending beyond any criticism of Israel to a path from promoting not just anti-Zionism or anti-Israel rhetoric, but how the body of actions extends to directly or indirectly promoting anti-Semitism.

Over the last 5 years, there has been a dramatic rise in global and local anti-Semitism. In 2018 alone, anti-Semitism rose 57% in the United States over the year before, almost 2000 incidents, the largest increase in over 40 years. In North Carolina, 16 anti-Semitic incidents were reported that demonized or delegitimized Jewish people or Israel, the Jewish people's homeland.

Anti-Semitism, like other race prejudices, has affected civil society for thousands of years and continues as a threat to social stability. According to the Anti-Defamation League's 2014 survey of 100 countries, representing over 4 billion people, approximately one in four people worldwide, over 1 billion, harbor anti-Semitic attitudes. One in eleven adults in the US, or 21 million, embrace anti-Semitic thoughts.

It is critical to know the definition of anti-Semitism. According to the U.S. State Department and the European Union:

Anti-Semitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of anti-Semitism are directed toward Jewish or non-Jewish individuals and/or their property, toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities. It is expressed in speech, writing, visual forms and action, and employs sinister stereotypes and negative character traits. Anti-Semitism may manifest itself with regard to the state of Israel through actions which attempt to demonize, delegitimize or apply double standards to Israel because of Jewish identity.

Anti-Semitism, such as being called a "Nazi" for supporting Israel's right to exist, being harassed in the street for wearing a kippah, or being worried that your family may be threatened or killed while attending a Jewish communal event, such as attending synagogue, is all too real for Jewish citizens of the World, something that may be difficult to understand for those not of the Jewish faith. It is also critical to understand that while legitimate criticism of Israeli government policies is not necessarily anti-Semitic, much rhetoric and actions targeting Israel that are expressly couched as anti-Zionist and anti-Israel also meet established definitions of anti-Semitism. This includes many actions of those espousing the Boycott, Divestment and Sanction (BDS) resolutions in cities and college campuses that not only target Israel, but often uses language and actions that clearly go beyond criticism to demonization and delegitimization.

In the aftermath of the Durham Council Meetings of April 5th and April 16th, which selectively targeted Israel for criticism, the mainstream Jewish population of Durham and the region were left with specific

concerns about anti-Semitic overtones surrounding actions designed directly or indirectly to demonize, delegitimize or apply double standards to Israel. These concerns included:

- 1) The City Council spent hundreds of hours for a resolution and then a statement about an issue (police exchanges from Durham to Israel) that its supporters acknowledged *did not exist* in Durham and whose police chief said there were *no plans* for establishing. The resolution and ultimate statement singled out only one country on the planet. Had they ever done anything even remotely similar, taking an issue not real in the city and then singling out one country?
- 2) Did the Council believe that in 2018 Durham police shouldn't learn about leading counter-terror strategies from the one world democracy on the planet that has the most experience in dealing with terrorism? Israel's crime rate is 100% lower than the U.S., its murder rate is 150% lower, and its rape rate is 45% lower. Rather, Israel was selectively targeted by anti-Israel activists wanting to use the Council for political purposes, not to benefit the people of Durham.
- 3) Did the Council ask staff to conduct research or search for evidence looking at the truth of the petition that known anti-Israel groups brought to them? What independent evidence did the staff find that Israel trained police to brutalize people of color vs protecting its citizens, including millions of people of color, from terrorist attacks and missiles that occur most days of the year, including over 100 alone in the last week of May sent in from Gaza by Hamas to civilian areas?
- 4) Why did the Council selectively put only one statement from the Durham Police Chief in their final statement that allowed them to single out Israel in a derogative way by saying that no exchanges with Israel existed in Durham nor were any intended? If they were going to include her statement, they should have also stated her first-hand testimony about the training she had received when she was in Atlanta. She stated: "My specific visit [while an Atlanta chief] was based on developing leadership academies, leadership principles, and the challenges experienced with building community and police relations with the growing homeless population in the US, comparable to Sudanese populations in Israel. The Atlanta Police Leadership Institute (APU) was an assigned project under my leadership and is well regarded as a curriculum designed to groom bright and extremely prepared Atlanta Police leaders of tomorrow. This highly academic training has no police operations component, and challenges selected participants to become 21st Century police leaders." This statement argues against the Council condemnation of exchanges, not for a one sentence selective inclusion of her statement that the Council put in their statement about Israel, a statement picked up by media outlets across the world and the basis for dozens of media reports to demonize and delegitimize Israel.
- 5) Did City Council members really believe, as the petitioners alleged, that the Anti-Defamation League (ADL), other Jewish organization and Israel were complicit in police brutality in the U.S. as alleged in the initial resolution that 6 of 7 Council member supported? The ADL is the U.S. authority on speaking out against hate speech and anti-Semitism for over 5 decades. Conspiracy suggestions are age-old canards used by groups that hate Jews and Israel and espouse anti-Semitic views. All demonizing and false claims immediately discredit those bringing petitions.
- 6) Did the Council believe that opening the local and subsequent international community to a litany of angry hateful anti-Jewish state rhetoric on TV at the City Council meeting on April 16 was appropriate for municipal governance? Multiple speakers espoused false and demonizing views about Israel and the Jewish people. What other country has the City Council ever spent two hours discussing? Would they have acquiesced to have two-hour open sessions on Hamas sponsored terrorism, not only against Israel, but against its own citizens who are of color, LGBT, of a different faith or political party?
- 7) Did the Council realize that baseless anti-Israel allegations, regardless of intent, directly encourage racial antagonism and ultimately support more radical views linked to anti-Semitism?

One such example was openly stated at the Council meeting when radical anti-Semitism on the left occurred as a speaker said Jewish leaders are Satanic. Another was in the emboldened far right anti-Semitic posters plastered across Duke and Durham after the City Council vote.

- 8) Finally, it appears completely unseemly that leaders of Durham and mainstream Jewish organizations were not allowed to call out their antagonists for practicing bigotry. Those who have been oppressed for over two thousand years have the right and knowledge to know when age-old symbols are being used to practice modern discrimination. Telling Jewish leaders across synagogues and Jewish non-profit organizations, including local Rabbis, that *they* do not know the difference between anti-Zionism, anti-Israel and anti-Semitism is condescending. A primary tenet of fighting discrimination is that minority communities who are the “authors” of their own experiences can and must define the discrimination they experience.

These concerns are ones that many of us hope the Durham Human Relations Commission will seriously examine in the petition before it and that form the basis for discrimination against the mainstream local Jewish community.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Adam O. Goldstein', written in a cursive style.

Adam O. Goldstein, MD