

Re: Police Exchanges with Israel

Beth Bruch [beth.bruch@gmail.com]

Sent: Thursday, April 05, 2018 12:08 PM**To:** Johnson, Jillian

Thank you!

On Thu, Apr 5, 2018, 11:42 AM Johnson, Jillian <Jillian.Johnson@durhamnc.gov> wrote:

Dear Beth,

Thank you for your email on the issue of police exchanges with Israel. Mayor Schewel plans to submit a statement affirming a city policy against police exchanges with Israel at our work session today, and I intend to support this item. After meetings with both supporters and opponents of the action as well as conducting independent research on police militarization and the practices of the Israel military and police, I believe that it is not in the best interest of the Durham Police Department to be trained or share practices with Israeli police and military.

I believe our police officers do not need to be trained to battle terrorists or fight an insurgency by foreign military and police in order to effectively protect and serve the residents of Durham. Though terrorism does happen in US cities, as we have seen recently in Austin and Parkland, Florida, it is a small threat when compared to the threat of being harmed or killed by a militarized police force. Americans are killed by police at a rate that is 500% higher than the rate at which they are killed by terrorists. Police militarization is a much greater danger to our residents.

It's important to note that Mayor Schewel's statement is significantly different from the original petition we received on this issue, which I signed. The original petition from the "Demilitarize Durham to Palestine" campaign included language linking violent policing in the US to tactics of the Israeli police and military. That language will not be included in the statement that Mayor Schewel will introduce today. Though many of the unethical practices that US police forces engage in are similar to practices in Israel, our police forces have had issues of excessive force and racial disparity since before these programs existed and I do not believe we have received sufficient evidence exists that these exchanges have definitely made them worse.

I do not believe that the resolution that we be put forward today defames or demonizes Israel. I do not believe that it is anti-Semitic, or that it is inherently anti-Semitic to criticize Israeli policies and practice, just as I don't believe it's anti-American to criticize the practices of the US military and police (which I do often). In fact, I believe it is a duty of those who believe in the inherent dignity of all human beings to stand up against injustice, no matter where it occurs and who is responsible for it. I believe that the Israeli military and police routinely violate the human rights of the Palestinian population, Arab & African Jews, and immigrants to Israel, and I believe that the US military and US police forces routinely violate the human rights of people here at home and around the world. How is it possible to have a genuine exchange of "goodwill" while this situation continues? A great many US Jews of conscience, including many in our community, have spoken out against militarization and violence in both the US and Israel for decades, and I will continue to take my lead from their example.

Though I understand that some in our community view a rejection of cooperation with Israel as anti-Semitic, I believe that idea is belied by the fact that our city government and the vast majority of our residents have a strong history of acting in direct opposition to hatred of all forms. Durham has a commitment to inclusion and diversity, and that there is no tolerance for anti-Semitism or any other forms of hate and bias in this city. I have witnessed our city leaders and many in our community actively fight back against hate in inspiring ways in the last few years. A number of our

residents traveled to Charlottesville to oppose the anti-Semitic "Unite the Right" gathering there last summer. When people thought white nationalist groups were coming to march in Durham, a thousand of them showed up downtown ready to resist. When I found an anti-Semitic hate symbol carved into a city parking garage, it was removed within a few hours of my report. When white ethno-nationalist and anti-Semitic flyers have showed up around town, our residents and staff have removed them as quickly as possible. We have passed resolutions supporting the rights of immigrants and refugees and opposing Trump's immigration policies. This city has and will continue to stand up against hate in all its forms.

I am also heartened that the City of Durham and the Durham Police Department have taken affirmative steps to shift toward more a more responsible and less violent policing practice than exists in the US broadly, and we are beginning to see the results of that in our recent policing statistics. We have reduced traffic stops, consent searches, and drug arrests, are approving more U-Visas and are making active use of a misdemeanor diversion program for youth. More officers are making use of de-escalation, race equity, and crisis intervention training. These are the practices that I believe keep Durham residents safe and the direction in which we should continue to move.

Thank you again for sharing your thoughts,

Jillian

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