

To Members of the Durham Human Relations Commission
Re: The City Council caused extensive pain to those who protested the
City's decision to single out Israel in their Statement

Ladies and Gentlemen,

The passage of the Statement (labeled by Mayor Schewel as the "Israel Resolution" in many of his emails) by the City Council on April 16 was a significant insult to us. It was also done in a manner offensive to good Human Relations among the citizens of our community. Such a decision should never have been taken. The Statement and the process to pass it requires your thorough evaluation because of the harm to our human relationships in the community.

We are writing as the representatives of the mainstream Jewish Community of Durham. We felt it necessary to respond to the dramatic and highly flawed September 4 presentation that you have recently read and heard and share deeper insight into what led up to these events. These continued inflammatory communications only add to the hurt and insult of the City Councils actions.

EXAMINATION OF THE OVERALL PRESENTATION BY THE PETITIONERS

Most of the written material you received on September 4, 2018, from the original petitioners to the Council is a lengthy appeal to the Commission that makes the same claim to which we referred initially. They make clear that their real purpose in demanding the attachment of the name Israel to an otherwise appropriate Council plan to announce that militaristic policing would not be tolerated. In a private meeting with Councilman Middleton, that he recorded, he told us that JVP and their associates came late to the process and asked the Council to add to the existing statement singling out of Israel.

The basis of the initial argument in support of singling out Israel is in the first 2 pages of presentation to you of September 4. They urge that the name of Israel "must be a part of the Statement" on policing process because of Israeli practices in dealing with her enemies on all sides. They added that Chief Lopez and Chief Davis had gone to Israel for this type of

training. The Council did not interview either one of these experienced people regarding that claim.

The Petitioners, presumably speaking for the Council, tried to find a causal relationship between the exchanges and the discriminatory behavior of some Police in this country. They also sought to claim that Israel was teaching police “militaristic” policing.” Even Mayor Pro Temp Johnson, who has most strongly advocated that the Council single out Israel for ignominy, has acknowledged that she **“does not believe that sufficient evidence exists that these exchanges have caused problems.”**

We met with Councilman Middleton who said in this permitted quote:

“the conveyance of the importance of prohibition of Militaristic Training of Durham Police was not enhanced by adding the name of Israel to the Council Statement.”

By now, the HRC has learned from the Durham Police Department that there is no record of the training the petitioners claim or that the Council assumed must be true because of the early material the petitioners sent to them initially, which you have seen in an earlier communication.

Deputy Chief Marsh who was involved, as you know, during the earlier HRC review of police discrimination about 5 years ago answered an inquiry from us:

“No policy or tactical changes were resulting from Chief Lopez’s visit to Israel. The scope of his training was on leadership in response to terrorist incidents and mass casualty events. There was no interaction with the military or training on military tactics, equipment, etc. Concerning the multiple civil disturbances that we have dealt with in our City, I have been in the command post for most of them, and all measures taken by law enforcement have been in response to the behavior of the crowd at that given point in time. The tactics employed were the best practices at that time here in the United States.”

The Anti-Defamation League, which Mayor Schewel knows a lot about, wrote a letter to the Council in August, too late to get to them before the

April Statement was passed, but containing facts they could have gathered for themselves. The ADL regional director reported:

“Far from training that ‘helps the police terrorize black and brown communities, ADL’s law enforcement programs, including those in Israel, are designed to equip officers with the knowledge, understanding, and sense of accountability necessary to help safeguard all of our communities and ensure that our civil rights and liberties are rigorously protected.”

The actions that led to the petition brought forth to the Council is part of JVP’s national and international intention to single out Israel as a rogue nation. That was evidenced when they first released the highly inflammatory “information package” that contained a dense array of outrageous claims about Israel which we have previously shared with you. We note that in their presentation on September 4, they took no steps to defend their own material when we established that those publications contained many and specific lies.

Instead, they are now promoting a second and flimsier justification for targeting Israel which may be summarized as follows: Since bad policing happened here in Durham and Ferguson; and Israel is in a continuous war with its neighbors, there must be a causal relationship.... American police are learning how to deal in a brutal manner with crowd control from Israeli training. This is the only basis for making the argument that there is a causal relationship between police training in Israel and police brutality in the U.S. We are objecting to the willingness of the Council to accept the baseless assertions of the petitioners regarding the exchanges with Israel in the absence of evidence or an attempt at due diligence.

Speaking at Judea Reform on October 4, Mayor Schewel even echoed some of these claims by alleging that Israel “needed” to be in the “Israel Resolution” (April 16 Statement) because retired Chief Lopez received military training in Israel. This allegation was [easily rejected](#) by the Durham Police Department.

Therefore, through the process you are engaging in to review this matter, we ask you to please conduct interviews with people, including Chief Davis and Chief Ramsey, who actually attended these exchanges to understand

what the curriculum is and was. The Council never asked them what their own experiences had been. Not conducting such interviews was a severe omission.

The response on September 4 from the Petitioners was well rehearsed and executed. They ignored our appeal to be treated as a respected minority who experienced a strong feeling of alienation as a consequence of the hasty secret plan of the government of Durham. Instead, the vast majority of their presentation asserted over and over how much they disapprove of Israel.

Please look again at the video talk we sent to you by Bishop Ronald Godbee, author of the Book entitled, ***“Why Leaders Fail.”*** He commented on the lack of evidence and said this: “I have been profoundly impacted as I talked with citizens who have been hurt by this issue. If our motives were pure, an apology to Jewish brothers and sisters is demanded.”

THE SEQUENCE OF PREJUDICIAL EMAILS, SECRET CONTACTS, BIASED HASTE, AND DENIAL OF THE COUNCIL

The planning to get support from a group of Council Members who were already prepared to accept the theme that Israel teaches police to brutalize citizens was overwhelmingly successful.

Their first step was to contact several Council members to begin to build their case including a letter outlining their intended campaign in November 2017 from Tom Stern to several Council members using their private email (thus keeping them from discovery by the press.)

The next step was the production of at least two highly inflammatory anti-Zionist “information packets” that are in your possession, distributed to the Mayor and Council both before and after their election. It contained accusations of Israel causing poor policing that were outrageously false. We exposed them in our August 26 symposium, after which JVP later dropped all reference to them. JVP did not raise them on September 4 but rather re-introduced the equally false story about the one-week leadership training in Israel by Chief Lopez. Nevertheless, the poison had been seen and very likely influenced later decisions.

Our concern that this effort was malignly intended has been strongly supported by a large number of more recent discoveries in correspondence and scheduling.

1. In 2017, the local chapter of the deceptively named Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) circulated several versions of a hate-filled, anti-Israel petition. Multiple versions of this petition alleged that training American police in Israel “helps the police terrorize Black and Brown communities here in the U.S.” This is a modern version of the ancient blood libel which accused Jews of using the blood of Christian children to make matzoh and incited massacres of large Jewish populations. We expressed our concerns about these falsehoods in a [Symposium](#), attended by two members of the HRC, held April 26, 2018. This [abbreviated version of the Symposium](#) is also useful

2. In January 2018, prominent members of the petitioning organization wrote a letter warning of the possibility that a highly respected Latina woman, Rocha Pilar-Goldberg, who is a converted Jew and was running for City Council might get elected. The letter warned that her election might interfere with their planned effort to get the Statement passed as a Resolution. The message was initiated by Elyse Crystall of JVP and a UNC Professor and addressed to Beth Bruch, Tom Stern, Sandra Korn, Noah Rubin-Blöse, and Gabriel Baldasare—also of JVP. Crystal wrote:
 - a. ***“Has there been any discussion on the stance of potential new city council member Pilar Rocha-Goldberg vis a vis our campaign and resolution? Her resume/bio includes mention of her being active in Beth El synagogue. A red flag for me. A potential obstacle for us.”***

3. A copy of this letter went to Jillian Johnson, who we have learned took the lead in having the Council pass the Statement. Note that the message carries the position that Goldberg should be blocked from gaining support even though she is Hispanic, just because she is also Jewish. Johnson, who has garnered a reputation for protection of

minorities, ignored this blatant breach of ethics and said nothing to the group with which she had already aligned.

4. Johnson received an email to her private account on February 17, 2018, thanking Ms. Crystall and the others for signing a petition which contained this sentence:

a. “The IDF and the Israel Police have a long history of violence and harm against Palestinians and Jews of Color {with} tactics of extrajudicial killings, excessive force, racial profiling and repression of social issues.”

5. The inclusion of this sentence in the petition she and others signed clearly indicate that the purpose of the petition, the writing of which she promoted, was to demean Israel. After that, in all the correspondence, much of it using private email, she and the Mayor each repeatedly referred to the draft as “**The Israel Resolution**,” not the “Anti-Militarization Resolution,” a title more suitable to their public claim of the purpose for the Statement.
6. Mayor Schewel used private email on April 4 to send a draft of the Statement to the private email of the Council members and two members of the Senior Staff. Thus, at the start of the Public meeting, only the Council knew what he had drafted. Moreover, he handed the draft that was ostensibly being discussed to the press before the end of the discussion. The more experienced Senior Staff (City Manager and City Attorney) who received this draft told us that they were given the draft at the last minute and given no opportunity to express concern.
7. On April 5, Mayor Schewel allowed JVP to present their petition at a city council work session, waiving the guidance procedure to sign up ten days in advance. Mayor Schewel recently admitted to financially supporting JVP. By fast-tracking this process for a fringe organization, he has financially supported, Mayor Schewel denied the mainstream Jewish community the time to which we were entitled to learn about the hearing, fully prepare, and participate. The waiver favored those who he has supported, an obvious conflict of interest.

8. As we have pointed out, the Council chose to completely ignore the comments from Chief Davis about the real experience in the exchanges. This is all the more remarkable because of her striking success in policing of Durham and the high praise she has justifiably received. She has praised the leadership training she received in Israel and says nothing that resembles the long and exaggerated statements by the petitioners. We think you should interview her.

9. That this appeal to anti-Zionism was infecting others in the process is clearly supported in a video of a speaker at the April 16 meeting that is combined with another video of another extreme speaker shown outside City Hall the same day.

RESTATEMENT OF THE FOCUS OF OUR COMPLAINT ABOUT THE COUNCIL'S MANAGEMENT OF THE ALLEGATIONS

We are in complete agreement with the Council decision to avoid excess arms or use of weapons by the Durham Police. Indeed, we admire the Chief for successful deployment of the leadership training she gained in Israel (by her own testimony) to achieve increased public approval and reduced violent crime in Durham. The allegation that Israel police had anything to do with any single regrettable policing event in Durham makes no sense given the timelines and the reports of what Chief Lopez actually experienced.

MISLEADING STATEMENTS IN PETITIONERS' PRESENTATION ON SEPTEMBER 4, 2018

Almost all of their presentation was irrelevant to our petition which stated that we were alienated by the insertion of the name Israel in a document that could have only said that the Council was opposed to the militaristic training of police.

However, the petitioners based much of their 20 minutes on the claim that our appeal was "without merit."

Here is an abbreviated list of the statements that they put forth as evidence of the lack of merit. We emphasize that you have not heard formally from the Council, but only from an organization whose mission is to defame and boycott Israel. They cannot and do not claim that we oppose the plea to demilitarize police training. As we have repeatedly said, the mainstream Jewish community clearly supports the bulk of the April 16 Statement – it is only the inclusion of Israel that we oppose.

1. Stern's assertion that we label "any criticism" of Israel to be anti-Semitic is an outrageous lie. All of us who have signed this statement at some point have and do criticize the actions of the State of Israel. The essential difference is that we do not invent scenarios to justify our criticisms or wish for Israel to cease to exist.
2. It was said, that we claimed to represent the entire Jewish Community. We said that we speak for "many."
3. The lengthy complaint about Israeli army actions against a recurrent mortal military threat in Israel is irrelevant because the U.S. police do not train with the Israeli army. Had they wished to know of the interactions during US police training with Israeli police they would have asked what Chief Davis and other leaders actually experienced.
4. The petitioners have taken the strange position of telling us what we should interpret as insulting to us. Claiming superior knowledge of what could arouse feelings of alienation, injury and pain in others is insolent.
5. They said: "Having the Durham police force undergo counterterrorism training offered by a country like Israel that is criticized by major human rights organizations inside and outside of its borders for using aggressive and deadly militaristic tactics against Palestinians and Jews of Color is likely to move our police force in a more militaristic direction. Such movement is likely to exacerbate the harmful impact of policing on Communities of Color." The two situations are so vastly different that the comparison is irrational.

6. The petitioners objected to a non-statement. We did not imply that the Statement caused the Nazi speech on April 16 or the Nazi posters two days after that meeting. We did say that this discussion may very well lead to the sense of alienation in the community that we now feel.
7. We did not say that the Statement violates a Federal law; we said it might and that we would look into it. Nor did we claim that it violated the State's anti-boycott law; we said it did not comport with the spirit.
8. They decided to embellish the emotional appeal concerning a particular member of their group who they claimed was unjustly treated. Her name is Sandra Korn. She is indeed an excellent Hebrew teacher. She became an employee of the Jewish Federation during the 2017-2018 when a merger of programs occurred. She finished her period of employment, and she was not fired, rather the school year ended. She was not re-hired for the following year as the program she had previously worked for had undergone significant formatting changes now under the umbrella of the Federation. Changes took place during the process that impacted formatting, curricula and staffing needs. Half of the previous employees are no longer working for the program.
9. The complaint about two women being escorted out of the Symposium meeting is based on a truthful but wildly exaggerated event. They were blocking the single exit trying to hand out material in the meeting place that prohibited such obstruction. She was asked to make space and stop. When she did not want to do so, she was therefore asked to leave. Additionally, we asked the individuals that had nasty and inappropriate comments to her, to also leave.
10. Acknowledging that we are a divided community does not address our concerns about the harm done to the majority of us by the City Council. We understand the new wish of the HRC to bring the small Jewish group opposed to Israel into harmony with the majority of the Jewish community as a goodwill gesture. But our present concern is about the Council's flawed and aggressive actions and the resulting inclusion of the name of Israel in the Statement.

For all these reasons, we ask again that you review all the material and find that the Council made an unwarranted and alienating decision that made no contribution whatsoever to the benefit of the community and quite thoughtlessly led to our experiencing a sense of second-class citizenship.

Thank you,

Michael Ross, Chair of the Voice for Israel

Larry Rocamora, President Durham Chapel Hill Jewish Federation

Robert Gutman, Co-Chair of the Voice for Israel

Jill Madsen, CEO Durham Chapel Hill Jewish Federation