

New Jewish Network Launches Worldwide “Justice in Palestine” Initiative against Israeli Occupation

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Group seeks to ‘reclaim Jewish identity,’ raise a global Jewish voice to ‘challenge Israel’s destructive policies.’

A new international network of Jewish groups and individuals committed to justice in Palestine [released a statement over the weekend](#) calling for an end to the killing and an end the occupation. The network, which first met over the summer and has yet to come up with a name, currently spans 16 countries — from Brazil, to Australia, to Switzerland and South Africa — and represents 15 organizations.



An action by the American anti-occupation group If Not Now for Tisha B’Av in Prospect Park, Brooklyn, where participants read the names of Israelis and Palestinians who died in last summer’s Gaza war. (Photo by Gili Getz)

According to the preface to their statement, the group seeks to “reclaim Jewish identity not as a nationalist identity but as one that celebrates our diverse roots, traditions & communities wherever we are around the world. We believe that it is essential for there to be a global Jewish voice to challenge Israel’s destructive policies, in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. This international Jewish network aims to become that voice.”

Forty Palestinians and eight Israelis [have been killed since the beginning of the month](#). There have been [over two dozen stabbing attacks against Israelis](#) across Israel and the West Bank, with around 100 Israelis and well over 1,000 Palestinians wounded, many of them by live fire.

In times of heightened violence, specifically against Israelis, Jewish organizations and individuals around the world tend to either show support for Israel or stay silent. It is taboo to criticize Israel when there are terror attacks against Israeli citizens, as was clear during the Second Intifada. But that is precisely when it is most necessary. To both identify as Jewish and show a deep concern for what is going on in Israel while criticizing its policies is rare, making this letter is so important.

Here are some excerpts:

As members of Jewish communities around the world, we are horrified by the violence that is sweeping the streets of Palestine/Israel, costing the lives of over 30 people, both Palestinians and Israelis in the past two weeks alone. A 2

year old girl in Gaza was the youngest of 4 Palestinian children who were killed in the past two weeks. A 13 year-old Israeli boy is in critical condition after being stabbed nearly a dozen times. Over a thousand people were injured in the same period. Fear has completely taken over the streets of Jerusalem, the center of this violence. Israelis shooting Palestinian protesters in and around East Jerusalem. Palestinians stabbing and shooting Israeli civilians and policemen in the middle of the streets. Israeli forces killing Palestinian suspects when they are clearly not a threat and without trial. Palestinians throwing stones at passing cars. Israeli mobs beating up Palestinians or calling on police to shoot them. Humiliating strip searches of Palestinians in the streets – all of these have become a daily occurrence in the city in which we are raised to pray for peace, as well as other places in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank....

It is incumbent on all Jews around the world to pressure the Israeli government – and those who follow and support its words and deeds – to change its approach. The military crackdown must cease immediately, Palestinians must be allowed complete freedom of movement. It is also a responsibility of Jewish people worldwide to obligate the countries in which we live to immediately cease the economic and military support of the ongoing Israeli occupation in Palestine and siege of Gaza.

As a group of Jews from around the world we believe that immediate change needs to come from the Israeli government and Israeli people. It is incumbent on all Jews around the world to pressure the Israeli government – and those who follow and support its words and deeds – to change its approach. The military crackdown must cease immediately, Palestinians must be allowed complete freedom of movement. It is also a responsibility of Jewish people worldwide to obligate the countries in which we live to immediately cease the economic and military support of the ongoing Israeli occupation in Palestine and siege of Gaza.

We call on our Jewish communities, and our broader communities, to publicly insist on an end to the violence, occupation, siege and military response and instead demand equality and freedom for the Palestinian people and justice for all.

According to Jordy Silverstein, a historian and writer from Melbourne who signed onto the statement, the point is to “increase the dissent in our communities.” The network, she says, “seeks to show that a Zionism based on militarism, exclusion, violence, division, murder, and lies isn’t the only way of living on that land, or of expressing ones Jewishness.”

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