

To Our Fellow Unitarian Universalists,

As many of you know, a business resolution calling for specific actions related to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is on the agenda for the upcoming General Assembly in Columbus, OH. This is not the first time that our Association has engaged in dialog and debate on this issue. In reference to this specific resolution, the board of UUJA has affirmed its neutrality: we recognize that Unitarian Universalist Jews reflect much of the diversity of thought and conscience to be found among Judaism as a whole. Our members, and the people we seek to serve, are on every possible side of this debate, and we continue to seek to be an identity organization that includes the full diversity of people who live at the intersection of Judaism and Unitarian Universalism.

At the same time, while we won't be taking an official position for or against this resolution as a board, there are important things that we do stand for that we believe are immediate concerns as we approach what is likely to be a contentious time at GA. Specifically, our identities both as Unitarian Universalists and as Jews demand of us that we be vigilant and tireless in uprooting and countering antisemitism. We are called to name it where we find it, and to oppose it wherever it is found, even and especially when that place is in communities of which we are a part, or inside our own hearts.

Grounded in our shared tradition, Unitarian Universalism, we advocate for active resistance to antisemitism as an important part of countering intersectional, identity-based oppressions. To this end, we want to share an important consciousness raising tool, which may help others to begin to better identify what antisemitism is, how it functions and intersects with other oppressions. Like all oppressions, antisemitism has its own unique, multifaceted history and context. We know it may be hard to understand where, when and how antisemitism is alive and operating, and the ways it can be harmful, traumatizing and alienating. We want to help raise awareness and call one another into respectful and intentional communication

As the General Assembly does the work of the Association, we call on all Unitarian Universalists to be particularly mindful of the moral corrosion of antisemitism, anti-Arabism, and Islamophobia as three deeply interconnected evils, which frequently manifest in the rhetoric surrounding many discussions about Palestine or Israel. To criticize the actions or policies of a government or a political faction must be permitted. To move from such criticism into the realm of denigrating an entire race, ethnicity, religion, or nationality cannot be tolerated. So we ask that all involved become aware of how specific rhetoric and language replicates antisemitism, in particular.

The galaxy of moral questions surrounding Palestine and Israel are long-standing and shaped by real human experiences and real human suffering – countless stories that must never be reduced to abstractions or dismissed as inconvenient. For many of us – again, on every possible side – these matters are profoundly personal. But the Unitarian Universalist tradition, and the Jewish tradition, both counsel us not to shy away from hard conversations, but to meet them with compassion, creativity, and a yearning for a more just world. Our two traditions also have in their essence a principle of holding differing voices at once. Whatever the outcome in Columbus, it seems certain that some

within Unitarian Universalism – even just among those names signed below this letter – will feel disappointed, hurt, or estranged. We ask those who favor whatever decision the General Assembly makes to extend their compassion to those who take it badly, and we also ask the disappointed to hold fast to the ties of faith and principle that bind together our covenantal faith. When this current round of debate is done, let us turn towards the hard work of change and renewed understanding, rather than turning away from each other.

Unitarian Universalists for Jewish Awareness Board Members:

Rev. Kelly Weisman Asprooth-Jackson (President)

Rev. Jay Wolin (Treasurer)

Robin Kottman (Member At Large)

P.D. Wadler (Member At Large)

Co-signers:

Rev. Leah Hart-Landsberg (Past President)

Rev. Marti Keller (Past President)

Rev. Dara Olandt (UUJA Member)