

American Jews must stand with Israel against its enemies

“We will gather forces in Israel and around the world to shatter the lies of our enemies, and we will fight for Israel’s right to live in peace and security, to live at all.”



American Jews who are members of the Union for Reform Judaism, formerly the Union Of American Hebrew Congregations at the Western Wall in Jerusalem.. (photo credit:REUTERS)

19th century philosopher Max Nordau once reportedly told Zionist leader Ze’ev Jabotinsky that “the Jew learns not by way of reason, but from catastrophes. He won’t buy an umbrella merely because he sees clouds in the sky.

He waits until he is drenched and catches pneumonia.”

Israel today faces many dangers – an Iran nearing full nuclear capabilities, Islamic State close to its tiny borders, Hamas devoted to its destruction, a hostile United Nations, as the worldwide Jewish community faces an anti-Semitism unprecedented since World War II.

Meanwhile, the American Jewish community sees overwhelming assimilation and intermarriage, a reported two-thirds of Jews do not belong to a synagogue – and yet so many in the American Jewish community respond to the clouds facing the Jewish people by giving money to the New Israel Fund, an organization devoted to harming Israel.

NIF raises \$30 million annually from American Jews – to pursue an agenda which involves advocating and working on a boycott against Israel, weakening the Israel Defense Forces, both on the ground and via “lawfare,” and through various other mechanisms, including advocating for terrorists’ families and collaborating with the United Nations to attack Israel. If it harms Israel, count on the NIF to be part of it. Yet, in the face of catastrophe there are those standing with the enemies of the Jewish people.

That’s the way so many in the American Jewish community have chosen to respond to the catastrophes the Jewish people face.

As communications professionals – and proud Jewish-Americans – we support Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu who said we must stand together to “fend off the attackers” pushing for a boycott of Israel. As Netanyahu noted, “As far as those leading the boycott calls are concerned, the settlements in Judea and Samaria are not the focus of the conflict, but rather our settlements in Tel Aviv and Jaffa, in Haifa and Jerusalem.”

We have different political opinions, but across the political spectrum in Israel – from Labor to Likud, Bayit Yehudi to Yesh Atid – on the issue of boycott and the IDF, we must stand together. As Netanyahu said, we as supporters of Israel must stand, “Against attempts to attack Israel with lies, false accusations and boycotts, we must line up – Right and Left – to rebuff the pressure, expose the lies and attack those who attack us.” With all going in the world, we ask how can American Jews fund the enemies of Israel? How can they fund campaigns that weaken the Israel Defense Forces and support a boycott of Israel? To Alisa Doctoroff, president of UJA-Federation: stop giving money now.

To Karen R. Adler, and The Jewish Communal Fund: we urge you to serve the interests of the Jewish people and say “No money to organizations that harm the Jewish community.”

To foundations like The Jim Joseph Foundation, the Russ Berrie Foundation & The Leichtag Foundation who do so much positive work in so many areas of the community, we say: review the work of Alma Biblash, the executive director of the Human Rights Defenders Fund (HRDF), an organization to which the NIF authorized grants worth \$332,625 from 2011-2013. She has called Israel “racist” and “murderous” and described the country as a “temporary Jewish apartheid state.” Biblash supports Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaigns and promotes the Palestinian Arab “right of return.” You are partners with her work. Is this what your foundations wish to be known for? To a six-figure NIF donor, the Lisa and Douglas Goldman Fund: you give money to the Friends of Israel Defense Forces, a great organization – how can you also fund the NIF which harms the IDF so much? As deputy Knesset speaker Yoni Chetboun said, “The main goal of the NIF is to undermine the Israeli army, by knowingly financing left-wing Israeli groups that try to get young Israeli soldiers prosecuted for war crimes.”

To the Stella and Charles Guttman Foundation, who believe in “Arab-Israeli co-existence,” we say: the Jewish people all strive for peace and co-existence. Stop funding extremist organizations like NIF who do not recognize that Israel must remain a Jewish state.

The extremists of the NIF must be countered, and those who write checks must be challenged. Israel is in the midst of an unprecedented storm.

Simply we stand with Israel. Today, we stand with Prime Minister Netanyahu who said in a recent cabinet meeting, "We will gather forces in Israel and around the world to shatter the lies of our enemies, and we will fight for Israel's right to live in peace and security, to live at all."

Hank Sheinkopf, CEO of Sheinkopf Communications, is a leading political strategist who has worked on campaigns in four continents. His clients have included former President Bill Clinton. Ronn Torossian is CEO of a top 20 US PR agency, and author of For Immediate Release. George Birnbaum is a former chief of staff to Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu.

Scraping the bottom of the barrel

Israel and its supporters simply have no long-term choice but democracy, equality and self-determination for both Jews and Palestinians.



A relative of 18-month-old Palestinian baby Ali Dawabsheh, who was killed after his family's house was set on fire in a suspected attack by Jewish extremists, mourns over his body during his funeral in Duma. (photo credit:REUTERS)

It has come to this. Ronn Torossian, "the most disreputable flack in New York... representing the lunatic fringe," as described by Atlantic journalist Jeffrey Goldberg, has been paid for the better part of a year to attack the New Israel Fund and its donors.

Frequently teamed up with Pamela Geller, an Islamophobe so extreme that she has been described as something of a one-woman hate group by the Anti-Defamation League and the Southern Poverty Law Center, Torossian and his cronies purvey outright falsehoods on extremist websites and blogs.

And now, although the editors assure us they will not run such screeds again, we must respond to the recent

attack on the NIF in *The Jerusalem Post*.

If you care about Israel but don't pay attention to intramural spats, here's the synopsis.

The NIF – for 36 years a proudly progressive organization that backs Israelis working for human rights, social justice and religious freedom – has been under the gun from Israeli and American ultranationalists for more than five years. A coordinated web of far-right politicians and institutions, most associated with West Bank settlers, has attempted to shut us up and shut us down, and has extended this threat to every bona fide human rights organization in Israel. Although we firmly and consistently oppose the Global Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement and any attempt to try Israeli leaders or soldiers in foreign courts, the NIF is constantly and wrongly accused of support for these positions.

The motives of those who attack us aren't hard to discern. The NIF opposes the occupation and West Bank settlements and favors the two-state solution. The human rights groups we support hold a mirror up to that occupation, and the results are not positive PR for the settlement enterprise. We were also the first Jewish organization to defend the rights of Israeli-Arab citizens, whom as we know from the inflammatory rhetoric that some pundits and politicians employ are still often considered to be less than rightful citizens of Israel.

Moreover, we are unwavering in our support for the Founders' vision of Israel as a liberal democracy. We believe Israel can be both a Jewish homeland and a fair and equitable society that provides equal rights to all its citizens.

As Israeli society has polarized and as the power of messianic-minded ultranationalists has grown, we have seen the results of the increase in racism and extremism, from the streets of Jerusalem to the village of Duma.

And we refuse to keep quiet about this threat.

We also join the vast majority of American Jews and many Israelis in strongly differentiating between sovereign Israel and the settlement enterprise. We oppose Global BDS because so many in the movement deny the right to a sovereign Jewish homeland. I have personally published op-eds explaining why BDS is dangerous and counterproductive for the Left. At the same time, the NIF will not deny funding to organizations that call for a boycott of settlement products, assuming they meet our other rigorous funding criteria. Israelis deserve the right to express their outrage at the settlements, just as they might boycott stores that open on Shabbat or dairy producers that charge too much for cottage cheese.

This is the crux of the matter. We who uphold democratic values including freedom of expression, and who differentiate between Tel Aviv and Kfar Tapuah, are the majority.

Our opponents are the extreme Left and Right, who support a one-state solution with or without equal rights for Palestinians, erasing the Green Line and, we believe, any prospects for self-determination for both peoples and for eventual peace. In this, Ronn Torossian, Pamela Geller and the founders of the Global BDS movement are, ironically, on the same page.

Now, a mildly interesting question for me is the identity of the clients paying Torossian's fees. The dribble of repetitive op-eds from his PR shop appear to this communications professional – full disclosure, one who once worked for PR firms herself – like a high-priced New York company justifying a big retainer.

But for everyone else, and for tens of thousands of Americans and others who support democracy and equality in Israel, it doesn't much matter.

Because it hasn't worked. No matter how many mysteriously funded organizations and PR companies come at

us, we are growing and succeeding. The NIF is now active in six countries. We have expanded our program in Israel to build a better infrastructure for the progressive movement and to reach out to new constituencies. The last two years were our best ever for fund-raising. Our donors have rallied to us even when they have been called out on fringe websites, and some have even made special gifts in “honor” of Torossian and Geller.

Stooping to representation by the likes of Geller and Torossian only indicates just how desperate the extremists now are in my country.

More and more Americans understand the difference between loving Israel and supporting the current government’s policies. Of course, this government in Israel may be the most hard-line in its history; its narrative is dominant in Israel and progressives do not yet have the power to combat it.

But we will. Israel and its supporters simply have no long-term choice but democracy, equality and self-determination for both Jews and Palestinians. The vitriol from those who oppose those values will someday be seen as the last, vicious gasp from those on the wrong side of history.

The writer is vice president of public affairs for the New Israel Fund.

Apology

Israel News

By JERUSALEM POST STAFF \

08/22/2015 18:35

On Friday, August 21, *The Jerusalem Post* published an op-ed by the New Israel Fund which was factually inaccurate and slanderous.

The said article has been removed from our archives.

We apologize to Ronn Torossian for the multiple factual errors, as well as for the hurtful tone.

As published, the New Israel Fund remains a proponent of a boycott of Israel. *The Jerusalem Post* apologizes to our readers.

 webcache.googleusercontent.com

<http://webcache.googleusercontent.com/search?q=cache:eDlp7g9STuMJ:www.jpost.com/Opinion/CLARIFICATION-413109+&cd=1&hl=en&ct=clnk&gl=us>

CLARIFICATION



THE JERUSALEM POST

08.24.2015 | 9 Elul, 5775

Opinion

By JPOST.COM STAFF \

08/24/2015 18:22

The Jerusalem Post wishes to clarify to its readers that it is not taking sides in the ongoing dispute between Ron Torossian and the New Israel Fund.

As a newspaper, we are open to publishing both points of view, whether we agree or not. Our apology on Sunday, August 23, regarding the publication of "Scraping the bottom of the barrel" (Observations, August 21) by Naomi Paiss, vice president of public affairs for the NIF, was issued in response to an immediate legal threat over the weekend. We have no evidence that the op-ed was slanderous or inaccurate, and the NIF has clarified to us that its policy is to oppose a boycott of Israel. The Jerusalem Post apologizes to the NIF for any offense caused.