

*Resources and Actions Recommended by the Middle East Peace Committee
at the Kehilla Listening Event, May 24, 2021*

The Middle East Peace Committee strongly supports following Palestinian voices and leadership. Just as we are working on following Black leadership, queer/trans leadership and women of color and indigenous people in all their/our struggles, the MEPC likewise sees a need to deeply listen to and follow Palestinian leadership. This will challenge many of our growing up narratives. Feeling uncomfortable is an almost certainty. In this light, we support the work of Linda Sarsour and MPower Change as well as Lara Kiswani and the other folks at the Arab Resource and Organizing Center, and we challenge baseless charges of antisemitism against them. And of course, we support the Middle East Children's Alliance.

Almost the entire committee was in the streets on May 15 and after; some for their first time in this context. The current rise of Palestinian leaders, and Palestinian youth leadership, is moving us deeply. We support the Center for Jewish Nonviolence which requires its delegation members to pledge to follow our Palestinian leaders scrupulously when we are there.

We want people to see through blatant "false equivalencies" that seem to present the problem as a fight of equal forces. Military occupation of Palestinians is real, longstanding and still worsening. It is the primary problem, which means other issues should be treated as secondary, not as nothing, but also not as a distraction from the foundational problem.

Review the words of the early Zionists and see how they are being implemented in Israel today, and ask ourselves if Zionism is consistent with our Kehilla ethics and values.

Israel explicitly denies Palestinians political and national rights, and early Zionists even spoke of being "settlers" and "colonialists." See Rashid Khalidi's new book, *The 100 Years' War on Palestine*; also *Except for Palestine: The Limits of Progressive Politics* by Marc Lamont Hill and Mitchell Plitnick; also *A Passionate Pacifist: Essential Writings of Aaron Samuel Tamares* by Rabbi Everett Gendler.

Make a comparison of the arsenals of Palestine and Israel and see how imbalanced the situation is before condemning Palestinian violence as the source of the strife. We are proponents, even practitioners of nonviolence. However we can't ignore the fact that Israel has the fourth or fifth most powerful and deliverable nuclear arsenal in the world and gets \$3.8 billion in MILITARY aid (not loans) from the USA every year. Check out Jeff Halper's book, *War Against the People: Israel, The Palestinians and Global Pacification*. Also, Stephen Zunes' book, *Tinderbox: US Middle East Policy and the Roots of Terrorism*.

We oppose the International Holocaust Remembrance Association (IHRA) definition of antisemitism being twisted to silence and make Palestinian advocacy illegal. We confront the dual problems of antisemitism and unethical, dishonest charges of antisemitism intended to destroy people and organizations because they are Muslim, Arab or sympathetic to Palestinians. Check out Miko Peled's book *INJUSTICE: The Story of the Holy Land Foundation Five*. While the Jerusalem Declaration on Antisemitism is seen as a significant improvement, almost all of our committee members recommend that the synagogue support the Jewish Voice for Peace/Independent Jewish Voices of Canada "Five Principles for Dismantling Antisemitism." including its critiques of the JDA.

We want an official statement from Kehilla Community Synagogue to members of Congress on behalf of equal rights and justice for Palestinians. We need to support Bernie Sanders' resolution to block the sale and gifting of additional missiles to Israel and Betty McCollum's recent bill HR2407. We embrace and lift up Congresswoman Rashida Tlaib.

Current news portals we recommend include *Palestine Deep Dive*. You know where they're coming from by their name, but they almost always include articles from the *Times of Israel* and other not-left sources. +972 Magazine and Mondoweiss also are important as is *Ha'aretz*. Organizations we follow and work with include Combatants for Peace, Parents Circle-Families Forum and Friends of Sabeel North America (for a Christian Palestinian, liberation theology perspective). Through our late member, Allan Solomonow, of blessed memory, I have met the ground-breaking Palestinian journalist, Raymonda Tawil. She wrote *My Home. My Prison* with her Israeli friend Peretz Kidron while under house arrest in 1977. Her deep friendship with Moshe Dayan's first wife, Ruth Dayan, is documented in Anthony David's book *An Improbable Friendship*. Watch and be disturbed by a short documentary video that goes inside the community of the terrorist Baruch Goldstein, *Inside God's Bunker*, about Hebron in the 1990s.

Finally, our committee has lost a couple of members, now of blessed memory, who went home in the last while, Judy Montel and Rich Yurman. A couple of other core members have needed to step back for other important, personal reasons. **Moving forward, we want to help Kehilla engage with this heart wrenching issue as a community, in our activism and in our prayer life. We hope you will attend our events and even consider joining our committee.** Thank you.

[There were too many references to look them all up and insert links. I tried to highlight all of the resources in the text to be easier to find for copying and pasting. -Jim]