



Jewish Community Relations Council

A service of the Allied Jewish Federation of Colorado

JCRC LEADERSHIP

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Rick Kornfeld

DIRECTOR

Janet Sherman

**ALLIED JEWISH FEDERATION
OF COLORADO LEADERSHIP**

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Boulder JCC

CAJE

Congregation B'nai Chaim

Congregation B'nai Torah

Congregation Bonai Shalom

Congregation Rodef Shalom

Denver Academy of Torah (DAT)

DAT Minyan

Denver Chapter of Hadassah

Denver Jewish Day School

Hebrew Educational Alliance

Hillel of Colorado

Jewish Family Service of Colorado

Jewish National Fund

Jewish War Veterans: Post #344

Keshet (GLBT)

Keshet of the Rockies

L.E.A. (Littleton-Englewood-Aurora)

Chapter of Hadassah

The Mizel Museum, the Counterterrorism
Education Learning Lab, and Babi Yar Park

National Council of Jewish Women,
Colorado Section

ORT America, Denver Chapter

Robert E. Loup Jewish Community Center

The Rocky Mountain Rabbinical Council

Shalom Park Caring Continuum

Synagogue Council of Greater Denver

Temple Emanuel

Temple Sinai

February 22, 2011

Dear University of Colorado Board of Regents:

The Jewish Community Relations Council (JCRC) is a wide coalition representing some 37 local and national Jewish community organizations in Boulder and Denver, many of which support and partner with students at University of Colorado. We are writing to you with deep respect and admiration for the commitment that the University of Colorado has for fair treatment and tolerance.

We learned that an extremely troubling proposal is being presented to you at today's Board of Regents meeting. We believe that this proposed resolution is based on misleading and contested allegations that unfairly target the State of Israel while also marginalizing Jewish students on campus who support Israel. We believe that this outrageous resolution has absolutely no merit and should be given no further consideration.

We applaud the Board of Regents' adoption of the principle (Section 2.1 of the Board of Regents Policy) of "institutional neutrality" in social and political matters, unless it determines that the issue directly affects the university, is detrimental to the achievement of the university's mission and purposes, and/or threatens academic freedom. We submit that this proposal is not in the best interests of the university or its students.

The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is complex and goes back decades. While it is tempting to look exclusively at one side or the other to shoulder the blame, one-sided reactions do not serve to improve complicated circumstances. Instead, they exacerbate them. Therefore, we condemn all calls and campaigns for boycotting, divestment and sanctions of Israeli academic institutions, professors, products and companies that do business with Israel. We believe that any and all of these actions are counterproductive to the goal of peace.

The specific reference in the proposed resolution to "the apartheid policies of Israel" is in itself a most unfortunate and false analogy. The term "apartheid" refers to the official government policy of racial segregation formerly practiced in South Africa. Under South African apartheid, the whites sought to dominate the nonwhite population, especially the indigenous black population, and discriminated against people of color in the political, legal, and economic sectors.

By contrast, Israel's Declaration of Independence called upon the Arab inhabitants of Israel to "participate in the building of the State on the basis of full and equal citizenship and due representation in all its provisional and permanent institutions." The 156,000 Arabs within Israel's borders in 1948



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were given citizenship in the new State of Israel. Today, this Arab minority comprises 20% of the population. It is illegal for employers to discriminate on the basis of race, and Arab citizens of Israel are represented in all walks of Israeli life. Arabs have served in senior diplomatic and government positions. Israeli Arabs have formed political parties and won representation in the Israeli Parliament, the Knesset.

Israeli society is not perfect — discrimination and unfairness exist there as they do in every other country. These differences, however, are nothing like the horrors of the apartheid system. Moreover, when inequalities are identified, minorities in Israel have the right to seek redress through the government and the courts, and progress toward greater equality has been made over the years.

Therefore, there is no comparison between Israel and Apartheid South Africa. There is no Israeli ideology, plan, or policy to segregate or persecute Arabs. It is a false analogy.

Divestment advocates ignore the complexity of the conflict, which they paint in black and white terms; human conflict is seldom so simplistic. The conflict is not a zero-sum game, whereby only one side can win while the other side must lose, which only perpetuates conflict. If proponents of such actions were serious about supporting human rights, they would focus on:

- Building up the Palestinian economy;
- Increasing education, dialogue and cooperation between the groups;
- Decreasing the influence of radical groups who promote violence; and
- Fostering reconciliation between the two populations.

The overwhelming majority of the Jewish and general community supports Israel's right to exist in security and peace, supports a peaceful resolution of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict including a two-state solution, and strongly opposes one-sided resolutions that unfairly single Israel out.

We respectfully request that you do not bring this issue to the table for a vote and that the proposal be given no further consideration.

Thank you for your time and attention. If you would like to discuss this topic with any of our agencies, please contact Janet Sherman, JCRC Director, via email at jsherman@ajfcolorado.org or via phone at 303-316-6490.

Sincerely,

Rick Kornfeld, Chair
JCRC

Janet Sherman, Director
JCRC