

Black Americans to Support Israel Committee

"Zionism is not racism, but the legitimate expression of the Jewish people's self determination... From our 400 year experience with slavery, segregation, and discrimination we know that Zionism is not racism." (From a column by Bayard Rustin, Director of Black Americans to Support Israel Committee)

We, black Americans, have been guided throughout our long struggle for racial equality by certain fundamental principles. These include:

- a commitment to democracy;
- opposition to all forms of racial, religious and sex discrimination;
- the conviction that denial of equal rights to any minority threatens not only every other minority but democracy itself.

These principles have led us to the following conclusions concerning the Israeli-Arab conflict and its bearings on American society:

1. We condemn the anti-Jewish "blacklist."

We have fought too long and too hard to root out discrimination from our land to sit idly while foreign interests import bigotry into America. Having suffered so greatly from such prejudice, we consider most repugnant efforts by Arab states to use the economic power of their newly acquired oil wealth to boycott business firms that deal with Israel or that have Jewish owners, directors or executives, and to impose anti-Jewish preconditions for investments in this country.

2. We believe blacks and Jews have common interests in democracy and justice.

In the fight against discrimination, black Americans and American Jews have shared profound and enduring common interests that far transcend any differences between us. Jews through individuals and organizations have been among the most staunch allies in the struggle for racial justice, sharing with us the conviction that equality is indivisible and that no minority is secure in its rights if the rights of any are impaired.

3. We support democratic Israel's right to exist.

The democratic values that have sustained our struggle in America are also the source of our admiration for Israel and her impressive social achievements. No nation is without imperfections. But Israel's are far outweighed by the freedom of her democratic society. Only in Israel, among the nations of the Middle East, are political freedoms and civil liberties secure. All religions are free and secure in their observance.

Education is free and universal. Social welfare is highly advanced. Her communal farms (Kibbutzim) are models of social idealism, creative innovation, and cooperative spirit. Israel's labor movement, the Histadrut, has earned the deep respect of free trade unionists throughout the world. Together with other Americans, we enthusiastically join in reaffirming the rights of Israel to exist as a sovereign state.

4. Arab oil policies have had disastrous effects upon blacks in America and in Africa.

The impact of the massive increases in the price of oil has fallen disproportionately on the shoulders of black Americans. But we are not alone in our suffering. Millions of men, women, and children in Black Africa face starvation because the economies of their countries, already crippled by drought, were further weakened because of oil price increases. The chief cause of Black Africa's disastrous economic situation is the price that the Arabs are exacting for oil—at the same time that they give lip service to their commitment to "African solidarity." The Arab oil-producing states have offered only small loans to the Black African nations, and then only in return for humiliating political concessions.

Israel, small and isolated as it is, has done much to aid the economic development of Black Africa through creative technical assistance programs.

5. We support peace through mutual recognition.

All of us long to see an end to the tragic Arab-Israeli conflict. We have learned from our struggle here in America that the only way to resolve a conflict of nationalities is through mutual acceptance and reconciliation. The Arabs have refused to accept the legitimacy of the state of Israel.

Israel has consistently demonstrated the desire to make concessions in the interest of peace with her Arab neighbors. But she has refused to accept the conditions that would threaten her existence as an independent sovereign nation.

6. We support genuine Palestinian self-determination.

We support the rights of the Palestinians to genuine self-determination, but not at the expense of the rights of Jews to independence and statehood, and not at the command of economic blackmailers or of terrorists who would force their own "solution" at the point of a gun.

We have compassion for all who have suffered in this conflict, not least for the Palestinian refugees. But who can avoid asking why so many of these people continue to live in poverty in the midst of Arab oil wealth?

The spokesmen for the goal of self-determination for the Palestinians through the so-called Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) have not been elected. They represent only themselves. The P.L.O., like all terrorist groups, have turned their unbridled violence against anyone who gets in their way, including Palestinians, and who disagree with them. Who can forget the murder of Israeli athletes at the Olympic games, the bomb letters, the airplane hijackings and attacks on the ground, the sudden massacre of the innocent civilians at the Tel Aviv airport?

Regardless of what the Arab world calls it, in the horrified shock of the people it is indiscriminate murder of innocents.

7. We will work for peace.

In the months ahead we will work for a just and stable peace, a peace that will not be a prelude to a new war but the beginning of an era of cooperation and good will between Israel and her Arab neighbors.

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