

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

For more information, contact Steve Feldman: 610-660-9466 or office@zoaphilly.org

Reprehensible! Says Local Jewish Organization

Philadelphia Mayor, City Council Members, State Lawmakers Support Those Seeking to Undermine Jewish Rights, Undo Jewish State of Israel

The Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the Zionist Organization of America views as reprehensible that some Philadelphia politicians sought to undermine the Jewish community earlier this week by participating in an event that garnered support for a movement that is designed to destroy the only Jewish State, Israel. It is reprehensible that the city would host such an official event and shocking and disgraceful that officials who represent all Philadelphians would attend it and participate in it.

On Monday November 29, the City of Philadelphia sponsored an official “International Day of Solidarity With The Palestinian People” event in front of the Municipal Services Building across from City Hall. Speakers/participants included **Philadelphia Mayor Jim Kenney; City Council members Kendra Brooks, Jamie Gauthier and Maria Quinoñes Sanchez; State Sen. Nikil Saval; State Rep. Danilo Burgos;** and others.

The event and the participation of these officials leaves an indelible stain on the city of Philadelphia and each of them individually. The Jewish community and our gentile friends must not forget this despicable act.

According to an eyewitness account of the event on Twitter, Saval, while speaking at the podium, referenced a “right of return” of Palestinian-Arabs to Israel -- a known demographic ploy to destroy Israel; “Sheikh Jarrah” -- another propaganda device to attempt to de-legitimize Jewish rights; the “occupation” – a demonstrably false canard; and other slanders.

According to the tweet, Saval closed his remarks by quoting Mahmoud Darwish (who had been a member of the terrorist organization the PLO) and then asserted “free Palestine”-- another Orwellian falsehood: There never was an Arab nor Muslim state in the region called Palestine prior to the amputation of 78% of the designated Jewish homeland to create the nation of Jordan. Sen. Saval’s remarks were extemporaneous, according to one of his staffers.

Gauthier posted to her Twitter page: “We stand with our Palestinian neighbors. We see you, we value you, and we empathize with your struggle -- to resist occupation and oppression, & to be recognized as a people.” The Palestinian-Arabs consider the entire Jewish state of Israel to be an “occupation” of “Palestinian” land – hence the phrase: “From the river to the sea ‘Palestine’ will be free.” Some 95% of Palestinian-Arabs live under the totalitarian regimes of either the Palestinian Authority or Hamas. It is those regimes that oppress the Arabs – and not Israel.

Brooks posted to her Twitter page: “Today we recognize that our struggles are interconnected and we celebrate the beauty, richness, and diversity of our wonderful city.” Meanwhile on Facebook, she posted in part: “It is equally important that we advocate for the fair treatment of our Palestinian neighbors at home and abroad so that all people may live with dignity, safety, and sovereignty. We must recognize that the history into the present moment of Palestine is marked by struggle. For decades, Palestinians have faced discrimination, displacement, violence, and occupation.

“As a Black woman I know that a threat to the rights and dignity of any people is a threat to us all. Because I know that our struggles are intertwined, I know that so too is our fight for liberation. And I know that when we lead with solidarity, we win.

“To all of our Palestinian friends and neighbors: may we all know freedom and justice in the new year ahead. Thank you for being a part of our beautiful city.”

Kenney apparently did not mention any geo-political issues in his remarks, but the mere picture of him amid a backdrop of PLO flags that represent decades of murder and terrorism against Jews and other innocent victims was at least 1,000 words of support for the PLO’s agenda.

The PLO is the majority component of the Palestinian Authority, a terrorist dictatorship that pays Arabs lifetime pensions to murder Jews and incites violence against Jews in the media, schools and mosques that it controls.

The mayor's proclamation cites an obscure United Nations General Assembly resolution that confers "inalienable rights" to Palestinian-Arabs. Mayor Kenney urged Philadelphians to "learn more about ways to support our local Palestinian community"

The local event was part of a worldwide United Nations event sponsored annually on November 29 – coinciding with the anniversary of the UN Partition Plan. The plan called for the division of the territory of Palestine – an historically Jewish area and the internationally recognized homeland of the Jewish People – into a Jewish state and an Arab state. The Jewish people accepted this partition, while the Arabs rejected it. Six months later the surrounding Arab and Muslim nations attacked Israel as soon as it declared independence, seeking to annihilate the nation and its people. This war continues today.

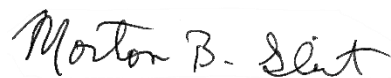
By participating in the International Day of Solidarity with the Palestinian People, elected officials from and representing the City of Philadelphia were participating in a movement to destroy the Jewish state of Israel; harm the largest Jewish community in the world; erase millennia-long Jewish history and heritage; and denying Jewish rights to self-determination. They were also standing in solidarity with the virulently anti-Jewish BDS (boycott, divestment, sanction) Movement, and rewarding terrorism and mass-murderers.

Standing in the shadow of PLO flags – incorrectly labeled as "Palestinian" flags – these elected officials, some willfully and some perhaps unwittingly, were supporting "Palestinianism." This movement has one goal: To replace Israel with a state of "Palestine" "from the river to the sea." The PLO has murdered scores of Americans as well as thousands of Jewish people. Their wake of terror, from hijacked airplanes to murdered athletes in the Olympics, was disgracefully ignored.

Does Mayor Kenney agree with this agenda? Is this the history that members of Philadelphia City Council praise? Is this how some lawmakers who represent Philadelphians in Harrisburg feel about the Jewish People?

We note that this event coincided with the first day of Chanukah. Many elected officials post Chanukah greetings on their social media. Chanukah is yet another proof of the Jewish People's connection to the Land of Israel as it commemorates an event that took place nearly 2,300 years ago in the Land of Israel. There were no Arabs or Muslims there – and especially no "Palestinians" in the Land. Yet these politicians stand with and show solidarity with those who accuse the Jewish People of being "occupiers" and "colonizers"- an Orwellian characterization for the Jewish people who are the indigenous people to the Land. Do these speakers recognize their own hypocrisy?

This event and others like it reinforce the need for more pro-active education, advocacy and outreach by those who embrace Zionism, Israel and the Jewish People's right to self-determination and those Jews who oppose the erasure of our history and heritage. While the Zionist Organization of America nationally and locally can lead these efforts and initiatives, we need each of you to get involved in being educators, advocates and initiators of outreach. Please support our work to the best of your ability and please take it upon yourself to actively participate in these efforts. The only way we can prevail is with your support.



Morton B. Gleit

Chairman of the Board



Kevin Ross

President



Steve Feldman

Executive Director