

DECLARATION OF THE

„JEWISH VOICE FOR A JUST PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST (AUSTRIA)“

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We address all people, regardless of their religious beliefs and political opinions, who desire a just peace in the Middle East. Everyone is welcome to join us. We have learned a lesson from the Holocaust: not to keep silent in the face of injustice and crime. We have joined forces because of this belief and because of the concern for the future of the Palestinian and Israeli people. We condemn the ongoing occupation of Palestinian land, which has existed since 1967. Moreover we share the concern of the majority of the citizens of the European Union about Israel's policies. In a poll conducted by the European Union in 2005 59% of the respondents said that they believed that Israeli policies were among the biggest threats to world peace.

The Israeli war against Lebanon in Summer 2006 is the latest example of this threat. In 1982 Israel devastated large parts of Lebanon, 15.000 to 20.000 Lebanese and Palestinians were killed and the country was occupied until the year 2000. During the course of the war this past summer, prepared one year before it took place, Israel again destroyed a large part of the infrastructure of Lebanon, killing more than 1.000 people, two-thirds of whom were civilians. Furthermore, Israel dropped 1 million cluster bombs and caused a disastrous oil catastrophe in the Mediterranean Sea. It waged this war with the support and in the interests of the U.S. Government and also in its own interest to destroy the sovereignty of Lebanon and to make it a dependent, vassal state. Thus, the plans of the U.S. for a new configuration of the Middle East – with the destruction of the Hezbollah and the weakening of Iran and Syria – were to be implemented. The implementation of these plans was a failure. And now the world, that is mainly the tax-payer in Europe, will again be requested to pay billions of Euros in taxes for the reconstruction of everything that Israel destroyed in the Lebanon.

Israel's new war against Lebanon, as well as the continuous intensification of the warlike oppression of the Palestinians, has sown additional rejection, hate and violence in the Arab world. The inhuman attitude of the superior military power of Israel against the civilian Palestinian population, which is under constant attack and whose entire infrastructure has been destroyed, has made the hopes for peace more and more unlikely.

Israel is the most aggressive, expansionistic, imperial power in the Middle East. Israel, the world's fourth strongest military power and the world's third biggest exporter of weapons, has misused the Holocaust to justify its policy of oppression against the Palestinians, as well as its policy of aggression against its neighbours.

The Holocaust of six million Jewish victims is the reason for the understandable need for safety of the Jewish population in Israel. This fact is being shamelessly exploited by Israel to justify the confiscation of land and its policy of violence. Especially in Europe the official Israeli policy uses the accusation of anti-Semitism as a pretext of trying to silence any criticism of Israel's policy of the unjust suppression in the Occupied Territories.

A large majority of the people in Europe wants both the Jewish and the Palestinian population to live in peace and security. But more and more people in Europe who oppose any form of racism and anti-Semitism, object to the Israeli policy of occupation of the Palestinians and are raising their voices to oppose it.

Our group, one of the network of 18 sister organizations in 11 Western European countries, is proof that not all Jewish people support the current policy of the Government of Israel while most of the official representatives of European Jewish communities are doing so. Neither they nor the Government of Israel, which pretends to represent all Jews worldwide, have the right to speak in the name of all Jews.

In direct response we declare: NOT IN OUR NAME!

The construction by Israel of the Apartheid Wall, or Separation Barrier, on Palestinian land contravenes international law. It was rejected by 144 to 4 votes by the U.N. General Assembly. The Wall separates 15% of the West Bank homeland of 275.000 Palestinians from Palestine and transfers this land to Israel. According to the United Nations the Wall will cut off 680.000 Palestinians from their homeland.

The continued projected development and extension of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land – on which approximately 460.000 settlers are already living – will lead to the annexation of the most important parts of the West Bank, with the intention of destroying the basic livelihood of the Palestinians and expelling them, or, forcing them to vegetate under prison-like conditions. This development mocks any pretence that the Government of Israel wishes to make peace with the Palestinians and intends to grant them their own state.

For decades Israel has violated international law, such as the Geneva Convention and the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Since 1947 it has ignored all U.N. resolutions regarding its policy towards the Palestinians.

Since the foundation of the State there exist plans for a “Greater Israel”, which would mean the complete expulsion of the Palestinians. These plans are being advanced by the expansion of the settlements. An ex-general, leader of the National-Religious Party, a former member of the inner cabinet of the Government of Israel, said in an interview: "The idea of the expulsion of all Palestinians, 'after which only very few Arabs would remain', seems politically tempting", but is only to be achieved under conditions of war" (Haaretz – Tel Aviv, 12 april 2002).

Over the last years opinions have been voiced more openly which speak out for an “ethnic cleansing” of the Palestinians from the Occupied Territories. There is also a demand that the Arab citizens of Israel should leave the country. These plans are represented by certain elements in Israeli society, and now, with the inclusion of Avigdor Liberman, in the Israeli Government itself. But whichever party rules in Israel, the violence against and assassination of Palestinians, confiscation of their land, demolition of their homes, the uprooting of olive trees (which has become a metaphor for an entire people), the withholding of major human and political rights as well as of normal citizenship, the incarceration of thousands of Palestinians (25%, or approximately 650.000 people, have spent time in prison since 1967), the destruction of most of the public infrastructure and institutions, in short, the wilful and systematic destruction of any basis for living of the Palestinian population continues. The purpose of these policies of state terrorism is the colonization of the most important areas of the West Bank.

Israel does not want peace but wants land (without the Palestinian population)!

In the mid-nineties the majority of the Israeli population wanted peace talks and the withdrawal of the settlers. But this was out of question for the leading Israeli politician-generals (Barak and Sharon). They needed to create conditions to continue with the policy of settlements and to convince the Israeli people to support these plans. Plans for the destruction of the Palestinian structures and for Arafat's expulsion had existed since 1996. Since October 2000 Israeli military circles openly discussed plans to take over the complete control of the Palestinian regions and to divide the West Bank into several isolated enclaves. This was one month before the continuation of the flare-up of Palestinian resistance against Israeli civilians (3 november 2000). This means that the continued occupation of the territories had been planned for a long time and not at all as claimed as a retaliatory measure against Palestinian resistance.

In 2000 an advisory board of the U.S. Department of Defence recommended to Israel that it should refuse the PLO as a partner for dialogue, to remove Arafat, and in addition has suggested to attack the Lebanon!

Both the U.S. Government and Israel have no interest in a sovereign and viable Palestinian state. Such a state would mean a danger to the corrupt oil states and other Arab powers which co-operate with the U.S. The final decision on how far Israel is allowed to go lies with the U.S. Government. Without U.S. support Israel would not be able to continue the occupation of the Palestinian territories. For decades Israel has been receiving a minimum of

about 5 billion U.S. dollars a year from Washington. Since 1967 the collaboration between the U.S. and the Israeli military complex has been booming. With the amount of two billion dollars the U.S. has supported the development of the Israeli rocket defence system "Arrow". Even Bruno Kreisky called Israel the aircraft carrier of the United States.

The planned annexation of another 50% of the West Bank would mean the "out" for a Palestinian state and thus a situation of complete lack of prospects for the Palestinian people. The so-called withdrawal from Gaza of a few thousand illegal settlers and the Israel army was only used to justify the annexation of further territories in the West Bank. At the same time Gaza is the world's biggest prison and Israel its jailer. The relocation of the settlers has aided the army in its control of the Gaza Strip. It attacks its inhabitants, kills more Palestinians than ever, and destroys any infrastructure necessary for human life. The continuation of this policy, in the Gaza Strip as well as in the West Bank, comes close to a genocide – a catastrophe for the Palestinians and for Israel, as well. The aggressive policies of Israel are also a threat to Europe, and endanger world peace.

We are aware that it is difficult to discuss this question, especially in Germany and Austria. The mass murder of the Jews by the Nazi regime causes many people to keep silent about the policies of Israel because of shame and guilt feelings about this crime. But because of the horrible crime of the Holocaust we cannot allow that the millions of Jewish victims serve as a justification for the oppression, the victimization and planned deportation of another people, the Palestinians.

We demand that European Union dissociates itself from U.S. policy in the Middle East and conducts an independent policy of peace in the interest of all peoples in the region and of the whole world!

We demand that Austrian policy and that of the European Union impose economic pressure on the Government of Israel to comply with the decisions of the United Nations, the principles of the U.N. Charter as well as of the Geneva Conventions!

We demand a boycott of Israel's products from the Occupied Territories or any sanctions including the divestment!

We demand a debate of this topic in the EU-Parliament!

We demand that the European Union makes clear to the Government of Israel that the Union will not finance or support the Apartheid regime of Israel until it finally reaches a fair peace agreement with the Palestinian people, in the interest of all participants and peace in the world!

We demand international protection for the Palestinians by means of deployment of U.N. troops in Gaza and the West Bank!

We support a l l p e o p l e who are active in the realization of these demands and we invite them to work together with us!

- There will only be peace when the Palestinian people will no longer be victimized, shot at, bombarded and its livelihood destroyed.
- There will only be peace when the Apartheid Wall will be dismantled.
- There will only be peace when there is a just solution for the problem of the refugees.
- There will only be peace for Israelis and Palestinians when the settlements in the Occupied Territories will be evacuated.
- There will only be peace for Israelis and Palestinians when there is an end to the Israeli occupation.

Vienna, November 2006