



2833 Smith Ave Ste 225
Baltimore, MD 21209

t 301.727.2700
f 410.602.1351
www.cjvalues.org
office@cjvalues.org

Rabbi Pesach Lerner
President

Rabbi Yoel Schonfeld
Vice-President

Rabbi Avrohom Gordimer
Chairman, Rabbinic Circle

Rabbi Dov Fischer
Western Regional VP

Rabbi Steven Pruzansky
Eastern Regional VP

Rabbi Yaakov Menken
Managing Director

7 Adar I 5779
February 12, 2019

Congresswoman Nancy Pelosi
The Speaker of the House of Representatives
1235 Longworth H.O.B.
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Madam Speaker,

Less than one month ago, we [wrote to you](#) to express “our alarm, dismay and outrage” at your elevation of Representative Ilhan Omar to the House Foreign Affairs Committee. At that time, we alerted you that “To allow this appointment to stand is tantamount to saying that anti-Semitism is acceptable to the United States House of Representatives, and would be a slap in the face of every freedom-loving American who objects to bigotry against minority groups.”

Your condemnation of her latest hateful remarks, while welcome and appreciated, is far too mild a response at this juncture. As per our previous letter, we cannot but compare your elevation of Ms. Omar to the Republican response to remarks attributed to Rep. Steve King that he has himself disavowed and rejected as hateful. They removed him from all committee assignments; you should do the same.

Hate is not a problem for either party alone. “Anti-Semitism,” itself a euphemism for hatred of Jews, is well known to Jewish tradition. It travels seamlessly between groups with otherwise diverse ideologies.

In 2016, the United States joined the 30 other countries of the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance in adopting a working definition of anti-Semitism, complete with illustrative examples to make it easy to determine when stereotypes about Jews or Israel crossed the line into anti-Semitism. It is this definition which is now cited and used by the US State Department.

Ilhan Omar’s 2012 tweet, as [we previously outlined](#), violated this working definition in three different ways. Despite the statements of her defenders, she did not apologize. She merely defended herself by saying she chose “unfortunate words,” and did not realize how they would be seen as offensive to Jewish Americans.

Along the way, she referred to the Israeli “regime,” using a word reserved for totalitarian dictatorships to describe the Middle East’s only democracy – the world’s only Jewish-majority country. That cannot be

honestly portrayed as mere “criticism” of its government. She doubled down on both her disrespect for Jews living in Israel and for the American democratic ideal.

And now, we have her third strike: her claim that Jews use financial levers to control government.

This time, thanks to your condemnation, she was forced to offer her “unequivocal” apology, in which she equivocated. She said that she remains critical of the “problematic role” of lobbyists, with AIPAC as her primary example.

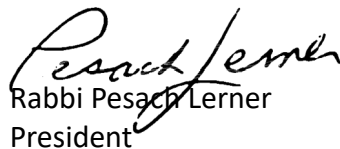
Americans, including their representatives in government, support Israel because it is a bastion of freedom in the Middle East, and a country of refuge for persecuted Jews – including the over 99% of Jews ethnically cleansed from Arab countries since 1948. Israel brought with it superior medical care and longevity, reduced infant mortality, higher education and the right to vote for all its citizens, whether Jewish, Arab or other ethnicity. That, too, is why Americans support Israel. The implication that you and your colleagues are being “bought out” by AIPAC is both profoundly insulting to your discernment and intelligence, and a classic expression of hatred towards Jews.

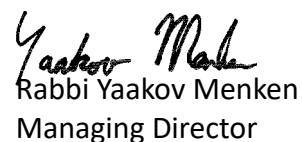
The question is, then, are you tolerating this hatred in the Democratic party?

To permit Rep. Omar to remain on the Foreign Affairs Committee, where someone still learning the root tropes of anti-Semitism can do the most damage to the US-Israel relationship, is to answer this question with an emphatic yes. Similar, future statements by her and others will reflect directly upon the credibility of your office, the House Democratic majority, and the Democratic Party itself, when they claim to oppose bigotry and hatred in all their forms.

You must act clearly and forcefully to declare such statements beyond the realm of civil discourse, and (at a minimum) remove Rep. Omar from this committee assignment.

Yours Sincerely,


Rabbi Pesach Lerner
President


Rabbi Yaakov Menken
Managing Director