

May 6, 2019

Sixth & I Historic Synagogue
600 I Street, NW
Washington, DC 20001

SENT VIA EMAIL:

hmoran@sixthandi.org jleventhal@sixthandi.org rabbishira@sixthandi.org kdoar@sixthandi.org

Re: Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony hosted by Sixth & I Historic Synagogue

Dear Ms. Moran, Ms. Leventhal, Rabbi Shira Strutman, Ms. Doar, and Board of Directors:

Since the founding of the State of Israel, thousands have lost their lives in the struggle to defend the Jewish State from its enemies, and thousands of innocent people have been killed by Palestinian terrorism. Each year, *Yom HaZikaron l'Chalalei Ma'arachot Yisrael ul'Nifge'ei Pe'ulot Ha'eivah* —Israeli Memorial Day or Remembrance Day — is a sacred day dedicated to remembering Israel's fallen soldiers, and in recent years the commemoration has also been extended to Israel's victims of terrorism.

Within Israel, *Yom HaZikaron* has been added to the National Jewish calendar and is solemnly marked by ceremonies mourning and commemorating the thousands of fallen soldiers and lives lost to terrorism. A siren is heard throughout the country twice, during which the entire nation observes a “standstill” of two minutes of all traffic and activities. *Yom Hazikaron* is also commemorated as a day of mourning, in unity with our brethren in Israel, by Jewish communities in the diaspora around the world.

Instead of commemorating *Yom HaZikaron* alongside thousands of other synagogues and Jewish community centers, shockingly, Sixth & I Synagogue has chosen to host [an “Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony”](#) instead. The ceremony is [sponsored by](#) the Parents Circle – Families Forum, [Combatants for Peace](#) and the [New Israel Fund](#) (one of the largest donors to Combatants for Peace). The two latter organizations are anti-Zionist. The New Israel Fund [is notorious](#) for funding organizations supportive of the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions (BDS) movement, and of accusing Israel of apartheid. Combatants for Peace [has a long](#) history of disparaging Israel and rejecting her right of self-defense against Hamas terrorists in Gaza. No other groups are scheduled to provide alternative views at this event.

This event is an insult to the memory of the thousands of fallen Israeli soldiers and Israel's victims of terrorism. Remembering and honoring the memory of the soldiers who sacrificed their lives and the memories of the innocent victims of terrorism must not become a political spectacle, which is the intended goal of the sponsoring organizations of the ceremony.

Furthermore, an “Israeli-Palestinian Memorial Day Ceremony” is the antithesis of a *Yom HaZikaron* ceremony, which as the full name of the holiday indicates, exists to mourn and remember Israel's fallen. Instead, it establishes a moral equivalency between Israel's soldiers and Palestinian terrorists. This event seeks to equate Israel's soldiers and innocent victims of

terrorism with those who murdered them in cold blood, often in suicide attacks. Israel's victims of terror includes people of all ages, religions and creeds, including Jews, Christians, Muslims, Druze, and people from various nationalities including many Americans. The constant barrage of terrorist attacks, in the form of suicide bombings, stabbings, rockets, car-rammings, and shootings on civilian targets like synagogues, restaurants, nightclubs, buses, shopping centers, and homes, scar the collective memory of Israelis and Jews around the world.

Since 1948, Israel has paid dearly to establish a homeland and safe place for the world's Jewish communities. Honoring Israel's fallen soldiers on the day before *Yom HaAtzmaut*, or Israeli Independence Day, is intended to bring to mind the ultimate sacrifice that soldiers and their families paid to secure Israel's independence. Many of the lives lost were young soldiers, barely out of their teenage years, and in the case of Israel's early wars for Independence, thousands of those killed in defending the State were Holocaust survivors. More than 26,000 men, women, and children were killed defending the land of Israel and in terror attacks since 1860.

As a Jewish institution, Sixth and I should ensure that the memories of our Jewish brethren are commemorated and treasured. We should honor Israel's fallen for their sacrifice, which allows us in the diaspora to have our own homeland, should we ever need it. Politics has no place in a memorial ceremony. Yet by hosting the event, Sixth and I politicizes this solemn day of remembrance, providing a false and dangerous equivalency between the Israeli military, innocent victims of terrorism and the Palestinian terrorists who murdered them.

Would Sixth & I ever agree to host a Holocaust remembrance ceremony that also sought to memorialize dead Nazis? Should America's Memorial Day ceremonies include representation from the Taliban, Al Qaida, or ISIS? This action by Sixth & I is an offense to the memory of those who paid the ultimate price to defend Israel, and to the memories of the innocent souls murdered by terrorists.

A Jewish house of worship should never provide a home for hate. A sacred place where hundreds gather each week to utter ancient prayers and share stories of Torah emanating with love for the land of Israel should never be made to bear witness to such an offense against the holy souls who paid the ultimate sacrifice in defense of the land and its people. To hold this event within the walls of a synagogue, in partnership with organizations that call for Israel's destruction, is morally reprehensible. We, the undersigned, in respect for the memory of our fallen Jewish and Israeli brethren, call upon Sixth & I to immediately withdraw its sponsorship for this event.

Respectfully,

Jacqueline Feldman
Founder, Sephardic Jews in DC

Rabbi Yitz Tandler, Founder
Joel Griffith, Chair of the DC chapter joelthomasgriffith@gmail.com
Young Jewish Conservatives

Ellie Krasne, Founder of Lean Right (a Sixth & I collective)

Maxim Alexandrovich
Druzya DC

Sarah Stern, Founder and President
Endowment for Mideast Truth (EMET)

Dr. Joe Frager, First Vice President
Young Israel Chovevi Tzion

Rabbi Yechezkel Moskowitz, President
Jewish Heritage Preservation Society

Moshe Phillips, National Director
Herut North America, U.S. Section

Helen Freedman and Judy Freedman Kadish, Executive Directors
Americans For A Safe Israel (AFSI)

Rabbi Pesach Lerner, President
Rabbi Yaakov Menken, Managing Director
Coalition for Jewish Values

Rabbi Mendy Mirocznik, Executive Vice President
Rabbinical Alliance of America

David Eden, Former Chief Administrative Officer, Hillel International

Duvi Honig, Founder and Chief Executive Officer
Orthodox Jewish Chamber Of Commerce