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20 Shevat 5781
February 2, 2021

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi
Speaker of the United States House of Representatives
1236 Longworth House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

The Honorable Kevin McCarthy
House Minority Leader
2468 Rayburn House Office Building
Washington, DC 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi and Representative McCarthy:

Thank you for your leadership in the new 117th Congress, and for leading the fight against renewed Antisemitism in America. We applaud you for condemning Antisemitic statements attributed to new Congresswoman Marjorie Taylor Greene, and made in videos she promoted.

We strongly encourage you to establish a neutral and bipartisan approach, utilizing the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance (IHRA) working definition of Antisemitism. The House of Representatives must ensure that Antisemitism is not allowed to flourish on one side by condemning it only on the other. In this specific instance, given that the House is contemplating appropriate sanctions against Representative Greene for statements made two years ago, it should likewise address statements made by other members in just the past few weeks.

On January 19, Representative Rashida Tlaib stated that Israel was denying access to COVID vaccines to citizens of the Palestinian Authority (PA), including her own grandmother. The IHRA definition includes "applying double standards [against Israel] by requiring of it a behavior not expected or demanded of any other democratic nation."

The PA has sole jurisdiction over healthcare in its territory per the Oslo Accords, and it preferred to obtain the [Sputnik V vaccine](#) from Russia rather than work with Israel. All Israeli Arab Muslim citizens and residents over age 60 — like Israeli Jews, Christians, Baha'i and all other citizens — were [offered the vaccine by mid-January](#).

To his credit, Congressman Jamaal Bowman removed the same bigoted falsity from his Twitter feed once he learned the facts. Representative Joaquim Castro, vice chairman of the Foreign Affairs Committee, has

not. He, too, referred to the Israeli government's "exclusion of Palestinians living under Israeli occupation from these vaccination efforts" and has neither retracted nor apologized. Neither, for that matter, has new Representative Marie Newman, who backed the same fabrication.

Israel's UN Ambassador Gilad Erdan rightly called this accusation a modern-day blood libel. This is almost correct. In the Middle Ages, the accusers did not first reject Jewish medical assistance before falsely accusing the Jews of causing their deaths.

Representative Greene promoted a video referring to "Zionist supremacists," and Representative Tlaib referred to Israel as racist. The sentiment is precisely the same. No one can deny that this is a bipartisan problem.

Working from a neutral standard will help prevent Antisemitism from being relegated to a political weapon. That would place American and global Jewry at greater risk, by claiming to fight hate while permitting it to fester.

We urge the House to condemn Antisemitic statements in a truly bipartisan fashion, without regard for the political leanings of the member making them.

Yours Sincerely,


Rabbi Pesach Lerner
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