

[A Letter to Detroit's Walk for Israel Steering Committee](#)

This is the letter Partners for Progressive Israel submitted along with our [Petition](#) to Detroit's Walk for Israel organizers, Ms Orly Zinkow of AIPAC and Andre Douville, the Executive Director of Temple Shir Shalom.

The support we received was phenomenal. We want to thank everyone who signed. We were particularly touched by the comments. Your support means the world to us.

May 18, 2016

Dear Ms. Zinkow and Mr. Douville,

For the second consecutive year, Partners for Progressive Israel – a founding member of the American Zionist Movement – requested to join Detroit's Walk for Israel and was unilaterally rejected. In a letter explaining the decision, Mr. Douville argued that if we desire to join the Walk, we should change our position on Boycott Divestment and Sanctions (BDS). However, as we explained on both occasions, Partners for Progressive Israel is a Zionist organization. It supports the Jewish people's right for national determination in our ancestral homeland. We participate in the World Zionist Congress, and are affiliated with the World Union of Meretz within the World Zionist Organization.

Like most American Jews, we are progressive. We support a two-state solution and believe that Israel's occupation of the West Bank, illegal settlements and the suppression of Palestinian rights threaten its future as a Jewish and democratic state. Many American Jews, and many Israeli Jews, for that matter, feel the same way. For years, therefore, we have called for a targeted boycott of settlements' goods as a means to help end the occupation. To be clear, as Zionists we do not support a boycott of Israel proper. Rather we accept Israel's territorial distinctions, differentiating between the State of Israel and territories beyond the State of Israel, and boycott only those areas in which Israel itself exercises military rule and not extend civic governance to all its residents.

Moreover, upon request we have supplied the steering committee of Detroit's Walk for Israel event with documentation attesting to the fact that the Zionist Supreme Court in Jerusalem, the only organization that, in our opinion, has the right to determine who is a Zionist, has ruled on this matter in March 2015. It determined that Partners for Progressive Israel is indeed a Zionist organization. If the Zionist Supreme Court attests to our kashrut, so to speak, why do you deny us the right to participate in the Detroit event?

Close to 200 people have already signed our [petition](#) calling for Detroit's Walk for Israel to include all supporters of Israel and not to divide our

community of Israel supporters.

Attached you will find some of the amazing comments we received in response.

We hope that in the future you will be more accepting of the wide spectrum of opinions among American supporters of Israel.

Sincerely yours,

Maya Haber

Director of Programming and Strategy

Partners for Progressive Israel

The Petition

We at Partners for Progressive Israel wished to join this year's Walk for Israel in Detroit. But for the second consecutive year the Detroit Walk for Israel steering committee unilaterally decided to prevent us and Americans for Peace Now from participating. They say their mission is to "unite the metropolitan Detroit" to support Israel's right to live in peace and security. Why are they dividing the community by deeming who is and isn't an adequate supporter of Israel?

The comments:

Steve Eichel, Newark, DE: "I am a Zionist and a democratic socialist...as were most of Israel's founders. Keeping us out is a travesty and an insult to our history."

Alan Weisbard, Madison, WI: "This action by Detroit Walk for Israel is both gratuitously divisive and likely to be counterproductive in multiple ways. It really is appalling."

Myron Aronoff, Haslett, MI: "I disagree with the exclusion of a Zionist group based on ideological "purity"!"

Stephen Appell, Brooklyn, NY: "This would be an outrageous exclusion of a group that has more historical ties to Israel than many supporters of today's right-wing government."

Maya Wahrman, Bloomington, IN: "there are many ways to "support" Israel!"

Susie Becher, Herzliya, Israel: "US Jewry must understand the difference between supporting the State of Israel and supporting the policies of the Netanyahu government."

Leila Mustachi, New York, NY: "ALL friends of Israel, including Peace Now and others, must participate and this narrow-minded exclusion harms Israel by its bigotry."

Neil Feldman, Brooklyn, NY: "Partners for Progressive Israel and Americans for Peace Now are especially Zionist because they understand that the long term security of the State of Israel requires that it be both Jewish and democratic. Those who insist Israel have a large Arab population, and that Israel does not need to be democratic, endanger the political and military security of Medinat Yisrael."

Carol Anshien, New York, NY: "We are seeing divisive and rigid ideology where interconnectedness and communication are needed; we need understanding and healing."

Dale Stern, New York, NY: "I am signing because I am very concerned about the delegitimization of those of us who fully support and love Israel but disagree about the best way forward. We should be able to reach across differences and find much common ground rather than dividing the Jewish people."

Judy Wall, New York, NY: "If Israel is to remain a true democracy, progressive Zionists must be visible and part of the dialogue. To deny progressive Zionists the right to be visible and heard is to deny the values of the founding of the State. We will not stay silent when our expressions of Jewish identity are being challenged."

Howie Schneider, Aptos, CA: "Israel is a diverse country and Zionism is also not only a right wing movement. If the center and the left cannot celebrate Israel, then Israel itself is doomed."

Ellie Menzies, Seattle, WA: "I support the stated cause of the Detroit community & would like to see it be inclusive & promote dialogue within our US community."

Ivan Huber, Los Angeles, CA: "As a atheist Jew, I strongly support the two state solution and regard "Partners" as a legitimate Zionist organization."

Lori Lippitz, Skokie, IL: "We cannot let others define who is Zionist and who is not. Zionists are those who believe that certain steps will insure the security and future of Israel as a Jewish State-period."

Riv-Ellen Prell, SLP, MN: "I am signing this because I am outraged that this organization is deemed unworthy of being part of Zionism and the Jewish people."

Marvin Engel, Brookline, MA: "I believe in justice and equality for all human beings."

Lilly Rivlin, NYC, NY: "I'm signing because we are all supporters of Israel, including those of us who call ourselves Progressives."

Phyllis Tell, Beverly Hills, CA: "I'm signing because I believe the

only way for a Jewish state to continue to exist in peace is to give the Palestinian people a state of their own.”

David Teutsch, Philadelphia, PA: “The pro-Israel movement should be as wide as possible, including those who fully support a two-state solution and a settlement freeze.”

Ahavia Scheindlin, Los Angeles, CA: “Let’s remember that no single Jewish community group can represent all of the many different interests in Israel. Progressive Jewish organizations exist because we were asked by Israeli citizens to support their efforts. Peace Now started in Israel as did The New Israel Fund. Our world is already so divisive and complicated. The last thing that we expect from the Jewish Community is to exclude anyone who claims to want to support it whether or not we agree with their politics. Everyone who cares for Israel should be a part of the celebration. A loyalty oath should be the last thing we demand from our own people. Let’s not be our own worst enemy. Israel needs as many supporters as possible from all across the spectrum, here and there.

Warren Ingber, New York, NY: “You raise the right question. It’s a walk, not a talk. If it were a talk there wouldn’t be two groups in the event who said the same thing.”

Jack Levine, Los Angeles, CA: “Is there more freedom for Zionists in Israel who oppose Bibi’s policies to celebrate than there is in Detroit?”

Alex Hershaft, Bethesda, MD: “I am a Holocaust survivor, and I feel that discriminating among different groups supporting Israel on the one day we should be all united in our mission is most destructive.”

David Goodman, Philadelphia, PA: “It’s crazy to exclude Israel-loving Zionists from the Walk for Israel. I think other sponsors should stand up for our right to participate. Temple Israel? Sharei Zedek? Beth Shalom? Beth El? Kol Ami? Beth Ahm? How about defending klal Israel?”

Alice Beauchamp, Sydney, Australia: “Enough real enemies, without seeking more within.”

Marcia G. Yerman, New York, NY: “I’m signing because I stand with the progressive citizens of Israel.”

Shalom Endleman, New Rochelle, NY: “There is more than one way of supporting Israel. The Peace and Democracy way will, in the long run prevail.”

Tracy Kirkham, San Francisco, CA: “As a life-long Zionist, I fear for Israel’s future if voices that question its political policies are muffled. Refusing to consider all points of view is not a

Jewish virtue.”

Gil Kulick, New York, NY: “No true friend of Israel, no matter how critical they are of this Israeli government’s policies, should be excluded from celebrating Israel’s independence.”

Sally Hipscher, Brooklyn, NY: “I believe in a two state solution because I believe it is Israel’s and the U.S. best interest.”

Laurel Mark, Madison, WI: “We need to hear the voices of all our friends. Ignoring the real ethical dilemmas will not lead to peace or security.”

Jack Greenblatt, Springfield, VA: “It is ironic that the quest for peace is now considered subversive by establishment groups such as the Detroit Walk steering committee.”

Neal Gosman, Saint Paul, MN: “There is not only one path to Peace and Security for Israel. We need to hear all voices. My children and grandchildren are Israelis. My ancestors (the Burnstine family) are among the earliest Jews in Detroit.”

Jill Oserowsky Stanevich, Ann Arbor, MI: “Tzedek, tzedek tiradof!”

Theodore Live, Cambridge, MA: “PPI and APN support Israel’s right to live in peace and security and should be included in the Walk for Israel.”

Haim hayet, Modiin: “I am a former member of the WZO executive, Head of the Hagshama Department of the WZO, and member of the Jewish Agency world executive.”

Jennifer Lewis, Detroit and Jerusalem, Israel: “We live in Israel and in Michigan, and we are parents of a soldier in the IDF. We are outraged that strong Israel supporters of our ilk are being excluded from the Walk for Israel in Detroit. This is inexcusable.”

Mark Gold, Teaneck, NJ: “It should be impermissible to block a Zionist organization such as Partners for Progressive Israel from Detroit’s Walk for Israel.”

Charles Nadler, Denver, CO: “I am signing because excluding Jewish groups is Anti-Semitic because their members are Semites! Get a grip!”

Pini Herman, Los Angeles, CA: “The act of preventing legitimate supporters of Israel from participating in the Walk for Israel only serves to justify those who argue that this is a reflection that Israel may be losing it’s democracy and negating the principles of its Declaration of Independence.”

Lawrence Joffe, London, United Kingdom: “The ban on the

participation of PPI bespeaks a small-minded and mean-spirited view. It denies the breadth of the community who truly desire Israel's peace and security. It ignores the voices of American Jews who desire a just solution for Israelis and Palestinians alike. It encourages a public view of the march as something only for rightists. It thereby damages unity within the US Jewish community, defames those with alternative views, and also plays into the hands of those who see support of Israel as a purely reactionary cause."

Maxine Spector, New York, NY: "Support for Israel is quite diverse, and should include those with varying opinions on what will help Israel in the future."

Ilan Halperin, Tzur Hadassah, Israel: "Support for Israel does not imply agreeing with government policy. There need to be a wide array of voices of all those accepting that Israel's character should be on both the foundation of Democracy as well as our shared Jewish heritage."

Jesse Kleinman, Seattle, WA: "I feel personally kicked out of the Zionist movement when this happens."

Stephen Wangh, Wendell, MA: "I have just returned from Israel and the Occupied Territories and seen first-hand the oppression Israel imposes on the people of Palestine."

Ayala Emmett, Rochester, NY: "IT IS THE RIGHT JUST INCLUSIVE POSITION ON PEACE"

Gale Dorion, Taos, NM: "Our voice – for equitable resolutions to conflict – counts."

David Abraham, Coral Gables, FL: "All supporters of Israel belong in the parade"

R David Frum, Seattle, WA: "I'm signing this petition since American Jews should be allowed the same democratic rights granted to their Israeli brethren."

Steven Reuben, Los Angeles, CA: "I believe in a big tent approach to supporting Israel and that diversity of opinions is a strength."

D'vorah Kost, Seattle, WA: "All voices have a right to be heard, and those who oppose Israel's Occupation of Palestine, and settlement expansion actually have Israel's best interests at heart. Israel alienates the globe with her practices."

Debbie Schlossberg, Milltown, NJ: "how do you 'unite' by excluding?????"

Clifford Miller, Caldwell, NJ: "A native Detroiter, United Hebrew School graduate, Bar Mitzvah & married in Bnai Moshe, I was in the first graduating class of Oak Park High School & Student Zionist

President at Columbia University.”