

Documentation

European Jews for a Just Peace

Last Friday, representatives of eighteen European grassroots Jewish peace groups gathered in Amsterdam to found a new pan-European organization of Jews who oppose the Israeli occupation and seek a just peace in the Middle East. Attending the conference were delegates from groups in Belgium, Denmark, England, France, Italy, the Netherlands, Sweden, and Switzerland, some of which were formed during this second intifada, while others have been active for more than 20 years. The newly formed organization, called European Jews for a Just Peace, plans to reach out to, and to speak to the greater public in the name of, the large numbers of European Jews who are dissatisfied with Israeli policies towards the Palestinians. In particular, it hopes to demonstrate the diversity of opinion within the European Jewish community, which has lately seen anti-Semitic attacks launched not only by non-Jews, but also by "mainstream" Jews against other Jews who have criticized Israeli policies.

The group soon hopes to lobby the European Union, which is Israel's biggest trading partner, to enforce agreements that require Israel to abide by human rights conventions. EU action has thus far been blocked, predominantly by Germany (from where there were also unfortunately no delegates to the conference). Because of the legacy of the Holocaust, Germans are reluctant to criticize Israel, much like an abusive father who has seen the error of his ways but is so overwrought by guilt that he does not intervene to stop abuse committed by his son. One hopes that Germans (and all people) will come to understand that their guilt for the Holocaust not only does not permit them to remain silent in the face of human rights abuses by Israel or any other country, but makes it imperative for them to speak out.

The new European group's initial statement is below, as well as information on how to join, to help plan coordinated activities, and to learn about the next conference, set for February 2003 in Brussels.--AG]

We, representatives from sixteen Jewish peace organisations from eight European countries, gathered together at the conference "Don't say you didn't know" in Amsterdam on the 19 and 20th of September 2002, call upon:

the Israeli government to change its current policy and implement the the proposals in the following declaration and all other governments, the United Nations and the European Union to put pressure on the Israeli government to implement the proposals in the following declaration:

Declaration

We believe that the only way out of the current impasse is through an agreement based on the creation of an independent and viable Palestinian state and the guarantee of a safe and secure Israel and Palestine. This requires:

1. an immediate end of the occupation of the Occupied Territories: West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem with recognition of the 4th June 1967 borders;
2. complete withdrawal of all Jewish settlements in all the Occupied Territories;
3. the recognition of the right of both states to have Jerusalem as their capital;
4. the recognition by Israel of its part in the creation of the Palestinian refugee problem. Israel should recognise in principle the Palestinian right to return as a human right. The practical solution to the problem will come about by agreement between parties based on just, fair and practical considerations. It will include compensation, the return to the territory of the State of Palestine or of Israel, without endangering Israel's existence.

We call upon the international community, especially Europe, for political and financial support.

Signed:

An Other Jewish Voice (The Netherlands)
Union des Progressistes Juifs de Belgique -UPJB (Belgium)
Network of Jews Against Occupation, Rome (Italy)
Group Martin Buber-Jews for Peace (U.K.)
Friends of the Israeli Palestinian Coalition of Peace
Just Peace UK
Jews for Justice for Palestinians (U.K.)
Jewish Socialist Group (U.K.)
British Friends of Peace Now

Rabbis for Human Rights UK
Jewish Manifesto (Sweden)
The Swedish Jewish Peace Group (Sweden)
Judische Stimme fur einen gerechten Frieden zwischen Israel und Palastina (Zwirserland)
Union Juive Francaise pour la paix - UJFP (France)
Le Cercle Français de Juive Diasporque de Gauche cerle gaston cremieux (France)
New Outlook (Denmark)

Additional statement:

The representatives of sixteen Jewish peace organisations from eight European countries, gathered together at the invitation of An Other Jewish Voice at a conference entitled "Don't say you didn't know" in Amsterdam:

Agreed to adopt the name "European Jews for a Just Peace"

Agreed to support and draw courage from all the Israeli peace and human rights groups, including the Refuseniks who oppose current Israeli policies towards the Palestinians

Deplore the authoritarian and violent abuse by some Jews of the rights to free speech of those expressing criticism of Israeli policies

Call on all Jewish organisations to ensure free speech, thereby promoting a constructive discussion on how to achieve a just peace in the Middle East.

To get in touch with European Jews for a Just Peace or one of its member organizations, please contact:

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Jewish Peace News (JPN) is an edited news-clipping and commentary service provided by A Jewish Voice for Peace. JPN's editors are Adam Gutride, Amichai Kronfeld, Rela Mazali, Sarah Anne Minkin, Judith Norman, Mitchell Plitnick, Lincoln Shlensky, and Alistair Welchman. The opinions expressed by the editors and presented in the articles sent to this list are solely those of their authors, and do not necessarily reflect the viewpoints of A Jewish Voice for Peace.

A Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) is a San Francisco Bay Area grassroots organization dedicated to the human, civil and economic rights of Jews, Palestinians, and all peoples in the Middle East.

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