

JVP NEWS

THE MCCARTHYISM ISSUE SPRING 2016 NEWSLETTER

JEWISH VOICE FOR PEACE



April 2016



Dear friends,

As our movement gets stronger and stronger, our opposition is also working harder and harder – pouring in money and trying every

trick in the book – to stop the tide from turning in our direction. We thought it would make sense, then, to focus this issue of our newsletter on the censorship and McCarthy-like attacks targeting our movement – and the incredible work our members and staff are deploying to combat them. This coordinated campaign includes efforts to define criticism of Israeli policies as anti-Semitic, a national legislative push to throw red tape in front of the BDS movement, and persistent misrepresentations in the media about who is actually harmed by the status quo.

I am asking you to consider this rising counter-attack as a personal challenge. It is a sign of our accomplishments and our growing power that so much energy is being put toward trying to prevent us from doing our work, rather than trying to win the argument on its merits. But that doesn't make this moment any less urgent or dangerous. If they succeed in silencing us, it won't be much comfort knowing that we scared them into doing it. However, that's not actually what I think is going to happen. We're going to do what we always do: be pro-active, and invite even more people to stand with us for equality, justice, and freedom. And I'm so honored to be able to do this urgent work in partnership with you.

Yours,

Rebecca Vilkomerson
Executive Director

**"IF YOU'RE
SCARING THE
OPPOSITION
THIS MUCH,
YOU'RE DOING
SOMETHING
RIGHT."**



RESISTANCE IS... ILLEGAL?

YOU'RE A JVP SUPPORTER: you sign our online petitions, donate money, maybe go to local chapter meetings or help lead a working group. Or maybe you're a member of an academic association or union that has signed onto the Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions movement (BDS).

Are you breaking the law?

It's a ludicrous question. But it might be one we get used to asking.

Across the United States, 2016 has brought a well-coordinated, better-funded wave of lawfare attacks on free speech and the BDS movement. Nevermind that BDS is a moral alternative to violence, repression, and decades of US policy to box out any legitimate negotiations between Palestinians and Israelis. Nevermind that the right to boycott is protected by the First Amendment.

Because backers of Israeli policy have decided that even if they're losing the substance of the debate, they can drown us in a wave of legal restrictions, red-tape, and intimidation.

And it's all because of the work you've done. This is a massive backlash, because Israel's hardline boosters are truly scared.

Because, together we've won a new degree of public recognition of this fact: Palestine is a human rights issue. A simple, but fundamental accomplishment.

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But it is far from a guarantee that anything will get better, especially if the other side succeeds in shutting down conversation about the issue to begin with.

You've done this by helping support innovative new campaign strategies, like the focused work of JVP Portland and the Occupation Free Portland Coalition that is pushing ahead with the first municipal campaign in the country to create an investment screen against companies that profit off the occupation. And you've done it by helping us call out the extremely biased coverage of *The New York Times* and other mainstream outlets.

And by helping us reach thousands of college students on dozens of campuses coast-to-coast, where literally every week a new spurious charge of anti-Semitism is thrown at activists who disagree with Israeli policy.

And time after time, the response isn't a defense of these policies. It's attempts to shut us down.

And this is not something we can ignore. In Israel itself, it's already illegal to advocate for BDS. And in France, the highest court has upheld the criminal conviction of 12 activists for advocating BDS – ironically using anti-discrimination laws.

And the same pressure is bearing down on us here in the US.

In New York State, for example, one bill working its way through the state legislature would create a blacklist of organizations and individuals who support BDS. They'd be prevented from contracting with or receiving funding from the state. And more ominously, those names would be made public.

As of mid-March, a total of twenty-one states are considering parallel legislation to squash our movement. In California, two bills sponsored by Orange County Republican, Travis Allen, would prevent state investment in companies that have boycotted or divested from Israel – making it exponentially harder for us to win campaigns that compel companies to stop their occupation profiteering. An Iowa bill would allocate public funds to create a blacklist of companies that have boycotted Israel, prohibiting them from being included in any state investment or contract.

And AIPAC and friends are pushing the "Combatting BDS Act of 2016" through Congress, which claims to give states the authority to pass legislation to divest assets, prohibit investments, and end contracts with any entity that supports BDS.

In short, these bills aim to make it economically impossible for any company

to meet the demands of BDS organizers.

But there is reason to be hopeful. In Virginia, JVP leaders are at the center of the Freedom2Boycott Coalition that persuaded the State Senate to table HB1282 which would have wasted state taxpayers' funds on a meaningless study of BDS designed to chill free speech and create a McCarthy-style enemies list of BDS supporters.

And as legislative sessions draw to a close across the country over the next few months, we are hopeful there will be more good news to share. If we're scaring the opposition, we're definitely doing something right.

Together we're going to push beyond defending our rights – and towards a day when the human rights of all Palestinians are recognized.

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APARTHEID IN ACTION

The US provides billions to the Israeli government every year. The Israeli government and private firms perfect some of the scariest security technology and protocols the world has ever seen. The more our movement grows, the deeper we're going to need to dig into the political, economic, legal, and social race-to-the-bottom that increasingly binds both societies.

Closed Borders

Palestinian Legislators kicked out of Knesset

MK Dr. Jamal Zahalka

Detaining Asylum Seekers

Policing

Freedom of Press Restricted

Palestinian activists from West Bank denied entry into Israel

Palestinian MK's suspended from Knesset as punishment for meeting with Palestinian victims of arson attack

"Anti-infiltration law" allows asylum seekers to be detained for at least one year

February 2016: Knesset ok's police to stop and frisk, explicitly says "reasonable suspicion" is not required

Government Press Office threatens to revoke press credentials for reporters who counter official narratives



FACES IN THE CROWD



THE HATE SQUAD

TOM COLE

Congressman Tom Cole of Oklahoma – **known for his climate change denial, as well as his anti-Choice and anti-gay marriage stances** – was one of the co-sponsors of the federal “Combating BDS Act of 2016.” Rep. Cole, along with tea party congressmen John Fleming, Trent Franks, Mark Meadows, and 18 other members of congress are pushing forward a bill that authorizes State and local governments to divest from entities that engage in BDS.

TIM HUGO

Tim Hugo, a Virginia Delegate who brags on his web site about **demanding that the Governor refuse to resettle Syrian refugees**, sponsored an anti-BDS bill. The bill passed the House in early February.

DAVID LONG

David Long, Republican state senator and long-time opponent of gay rights, sponsored Indiana’s anti-BDS bill.

A look at who’s moving the work forward - and who we’re up against.

ALANA KRIVO-KAUFMAN

STAFF LEAD

Alana Krivo-Kaufman, JVP’s East Coast Organizer, has been instrumental in fighting these state bills throughout the region. Alana has led workshops for JVP activists and allies to strengthen their skills in lobbying state and federal representatives, building coalition partners, messaging and media work, creating action plans, and more.



PAM SPORN

SHE’S SEEN THIS BEFORE

“As the daughter of a communist who was dragged in front of HUAC, had his picture and our home address splashed across the headlines of the Buffalo Evening News, who shielded my brother and me from hate mail, who lost his job and had to move us to another city for employment, I oppose this legislation targeting a movement for Palestinian human rights.”



JUAN MENDEZ

SOME POLITICIANS GET IT

Arizona Representative Juan Mendez challenged Arizona’s anti-BDS bill, which requires that the state’s pension systems divest from any companies that boycott Israel. **Mendez called the bill a violation of freedom of speech and unpatriotic.** Despite his efforts, the bill passed the House in mid-February.



SABA SHAMI

GAME CHANGER
IN VIRGINIA

In dozens of states, legislation is moving forward that is trying to penalize the right to boycott Israel. JVP activists and allies across the US are pushing back against legislators championing these McCarthyist attacks on free speech. Here are just some of the people involved in these fights.



RAHUL SAKSENA

ADVOCATE FOR JUSTICE

Rahul Saxena is a staff attorney for Palestine Legal. His work focuses on legislative issues and advocacy for activists whose rights are under attack.

KEY

- Supports Palestinian Human Rights
- Opposes Palestinian Human Rights

Saba Shami is President of Virginia’s New Dominion PAC. As Co-Chair of the Freedom2Boycott VA Coalition, **Shami was instrumental in fighting Virginia’s anti-BDS bill.** The VA Senate General Laws and Technology Committee voted to delay consideration of the bill until the 2017 legislative session, if at all. The bill would have wasted taxpayers money by requiring the Secretary of Commerce and Trade to spend valuable time and resources compiling information on BDS campaigns, and could have led to the development of an “enemies list” of potential government contractors to be blacklisted.



YES! I WANT TO JOIN
THE FIGHT FOR JUSTICE!

☐ \$100

☐ \$50

☐ \$18

☐ I’M JOINING THE CHAI CLUB
Make my gift renewable monthly.

PLEASE ACCEPT MY \$ DONATION.

Name

Address

City State Zip

Email

SEND TO: 1611 TELEGRAPH AVE SUITE 1020, OAKLAND CA 94612



Members are the source of JVP’s power - and we’re launching a member drive in May with our biggest goal ever: 1,800 new or renewed memberships.

“I JOINED JVP BECAUSE I WANT TO BE A PART OF SOMETHING HISTORIC.”

As a JVP member, you’ll help shape our goals, cultivate community, and maintain our political independence. But maybe most importantly, adding your name to JVP’s membership rolls proves how quickly this movement is growing.

JVP.ORG/MEMBERSHIP

Any donation of at least \$18 (or \$5/month) makes you eligible for membership. All donations received by May 31st will count toward the Spring Member Drive goal!



Megan White, founding member of JVP Champaign-Urbana

AND 2016 IS JUST GETTING STARTED...

Our work has grown so much we can't report in depth on everything you're helping make happen in each newsletter. Here are some highlights we wanted to make sure you knew about:



JANUARY

Methodists Divest:

Pension board declares five Israeli banks off limits for investment.

#SkiptheTrip:

JVP and the US Campaign to End the Israeli Occupation mount rapid response campaign urging Oscar nominees to reject free PR trip to Israel. *Variety* censors the ad last minute, but the *LA Times* agrees to print it.



G4S Divests!

World's largest security company sells off entire Israeli business and US & UK youth detention centers after multi-year BDS campaign.

MARCH

4 New JVP Chapters:

JVP-Nashville & student JVP chapters at Tufts, UC Irvine, and Pitzer College.



Open Shuhada Street:

JVP-Columbia/Barnard holds protest outside the Hebron Fund, thousands call for IRS investigation into settlement funders.

#StolenHomes:

JVP co-founds international coalition to pressure Airbnb to cancel settlement rentals, helps deliver 160,000 signature petitions to San Francisco, Portland, London, and Paris offices.



YOUR VOICE, EVERYWHERE.

Telling the stories people need to hear.

NAOMI DANN's Media Organizing Fellowship at JVP started on July 7th, 2014 – one day before Israel launched its assault on Gaza.

She jumped right into the whirlwind of media advocacy: in July and August alone, she got JVP's voice into dozens of stories in major papers, including the *Associated Press*, *The Washington Post*, *The Economist*, *Haaretz*, *HuffPo* and more, with a combined readership of over 250 million.

For this issue on McCarthyism and censorship, we wanted to give you an inside peek into the formidable inside/outside media strategy Naomi has developed. In spite of structural media bias, we've found a way to be heard, and are slowly but surely changing those structures so that real stories can be told.

The key to our success? You. Beyond traditional media work, our broad member base means media outlets can't ignore us – whether it's in letters to the editor, or by actually making the news in the first place.

Our media outreach takes a page out of our organizer's playbooks – including one-on-ones with journalists and constant relationship building so that when a journalist is reporting on Israel and the Jewish community, they already know to call us to hear a pro-justice, pro-equality perspective.

Outreach also includes pitching new stories to journalists. We highlight campaigns lead by members and allies, overlooked developments on the ground in

Palestine, or that one, tiny paragraph in a 5,000 page bill that most media sources overlooked but could mean a totally unprecedented US policy on illegal Israeli settlements.

With our direct media advocacy, members are on the front lines.

Naomi works with members to identify interventions into the media narrative, training members as spokespeople, writing op-eds, and letters to the editor. She supports chapters in developing media strategies to amplify their work.

And our advocacy is also about getting commentary on the news out there on social media – thanks to members extending JVP's reach, we reached an audience of 14.7 million on social media last month.

The third arm of our strategy is actually making news – sometimes quite literally.

In February, JVP-New York City and Jews Say No created a parody supplement of *The New York Times* that envisioned what could happen with honest, full reporting on Israel/Palestine – complete with satirical ads and a “corrections” section that actually named Palestinians killed by Israeli forces in recent months.

Going undercover to distribute 10,000 copies throughout



JVP-NYC and Jews Say No hand out 10,000 copies of a parody 'New York Times supplement' throughout the City.

New York City, the creators fooled even seasoned reporters in *The Forward* and *Haaretz*, who tweeted about “big changes at the NYTimes” and then others who presumed world-famous pranksters the Yes Men must be responsible. But when our team finally revealed themselves on Democracy Now!, the story generated nation-wide coverage in *Salon*, *USA Today* and many other news outlets.

The lessons from this story are clear: even when the media leaves out the devastating impact of Israeli policies on Palestinian lives, JVP members find creative ways to highlight those gaps, gain coverage, and still share the story with millions.

As we continue to work from the grassroots, we are simultaneously laying the groundwork and building the relationships we need on the inside to steer the conversation once it hits a tipping point. Together, we are making it unacceptable to ignore ongoing Israeli policies of repression, occupation, and inequality.

You are forcing this story into the mainstream.



Naomi Dann,
JVP Media Coordinator