

## **JVP's Approach to Zionism**

**"Solidarity is the political version of love."**

– *Melanie Kaye/Kantrowitz, Jewish American feminist, author and activist (1945-2018)*

Jewish Voice for Peace is guided by a vision of justice, equality and freedom for all people. We unequivocally oppose Zionism because it is counter to those ideals.

We know that opposing Zionism, or even discussing it, can be painful, can strike at the deepest trauma and greatest fears of many of us. Zionism is a nineteenth-century political ideology that emerged in a moment where Jews were defined as irrevocably outside of a Christian Europe. European antisemitism threatened and ended millions of Jewish lives — in pogroms, in exile, and in the Holocaust.

Through study and action, through deep relationship with Palestinians fighting for their own liberation, and through our own understanding of Jewish safety and self determination, we have come to see that Zionism was a false and failed answer to the desperately real question many of our ancestors faced of how to protect Jewish lives from murderous antisemitism in Europe.

While it had many strains historically, the Zionism that took hold and stands today is a settler-colonial movement, establishing an apartheid state where Jews have more rights than others. Our own history teaches us how dangerous this can be.

Palestinian dispossession and occupation are by design. Zionism has meant profound trauma for generations, systematically separating Palestinians from their homes, land, and each other. Zionism, in practice, has resulted in massacres of Palestinian people, ancient villages and olive groves destroyed, families who live just a mile away from each other separated by checkpoints and walls, and children holding onto the keys of the homes from which their grandparents were forcibly exiled.

Because the founding of the state of Israel was based on the idea of a "land without people," Palestinian existence itself is resistance. We are all the more humbled by the vibrance, resilience, and steadfastness of Palestinian life, culture, and organizing, as it is a deep refusal of a political ideology founded on erasure.

In sharing our stories with one another, we see the ways Zionism has also harmed Jewish people. Many of us have learned from Zionism to treat our neighbors with suspicion, to forget the ways Jews built home and community wherever we found ourselves to be. Jewish people have had long and integrated histories in the Arab world and North Africa, living among and sharing community, language and custom with Muslims and Christians for thousands of years.

By creating a racist hierarchy with European Jews at the top, Zionism erased those histories and destroyed those communities and relationships. In Israel, Jewish people of color – from the Arab world, North Africa, and East Africa – have long been subjected to systemic discrimination and violence by the Israeli government. That hierarchy also creates Jewish spaces where Jews of color are marginalized, our identities and commitments questioned & interrogated, and our experiences invalidated. It prevents us from seeing each other — fellow Jews and other fellow human beings — in our full humanity.

Zionist interpretations of history taught us that Jewish people are alone, that to remedy the harms of antisemitism we must think of ourselves as always under attack and that we cannot trust others. It teaches us fear, and that the best response to fear is a bigger gun, a taller wall, a more humiliating checkpoint.

Rather than accept the inevitability of occupation and dispossession, we choose a different path. We learn from the anti-Zionist Jews who came before us, and know that as long as Zionism has existed, so has Jewish dissent to it. Especially as we face the violent antisemitism fueled by white nationalism in the United States today, we choose solidarity. We choose collective liberation. We choose a future where everyone, including Palestinians and Jewish Israelis, can live their lives freely in vibrant, safe, equitable communities, with basic human needs fulfilled. Join us.