

JCRC Consensus Statement on the Terror Attack and Its Aftermath

October 23, 2001

The Jewish Community Relations Council, representing approximately 80 synagogues and Jewish organizations in the Bay Area, strongly supports our government's determined commitment to fight terrorism through the use of a targeted military, diplomatic, and financial campaign. We, along with all Americans, were horrified and saddened by the loss of innocent life inflicted by the terrorists' act of war against our nation on September 11. We further support the U.S. effort to enlist other countries to join in the fight against the worldwide scourge of terrorism, as only a sustained, focused, multi-level, effort can help deter further acts of terrorist violence. We appreciate the actions of our NATO allies, including Great Britain and other countries that are actively participating with the United States in coordinated actions aimed at stopping terrorism at the source.

We support U.S. government efforts to draw a distinction between Islam and moderate Islamic nations on the one hand and the terrorists and the regimes that harbor them on the other. Terrorists, not Islam, are the enemy, whether they belong to Al Qaeda, Islamic Jihad, Hamas, Hezbollah, or any other terrorist group that intentionally targets innocent civilians. We are confident that the U.S. and allied response will be well considered. Toward that end we support continued efforts to minimize civilian casualties and to provide generous and sustained humanitarian aid to the people of Afghanistan who have been subjected to brutal treatment under the Taliban regime.

There is never any justification for acts of terror that aim to kill innocent civilians. These acts are immoral and unacceptable no matter what the cause. We vigorously reject any attempt to suggest that the root causes of the terrorism are to be found in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. Rather, the primary cause of this terrorism can be found in a hate-filled anti-Western ideology that is based on a twisted and distorted view of Islam and that seeks to eliminate any Western presence from the Middle East.

At the same time, as supporters of Middle East peace, we welcome continued American efforts aimed at ending the Israeli/Palestinian conflict. We hope and pray that these efforts will lead to a resumption of negotiations and a resolution of the conflict. However,

we oppose any efforts to mollify potential Middle Eastern participants in an American-led coalition by placing pressure on Israel, America's only democratic ally in the region, to make concessions that would compromise her security. Such an attempt will, in all likelihood, fail to produce progress, and inevitably send the wrong message to supporters of terrorism.

Israel, a nation that has suffered repeated suicide bombing attacks for the past decade, and especially in the last year, has a crucial role to play in the American-led international campaign against terror, through sharing of intelligence, domestic security experience, and other expertise to increase the security of American citizens and of our allies.

We are gratified by the great sense of unity and common destiny that exists in America as expressed by the shared commitment to our country's values and resolve. As part of that unity and common destiny, we unequivocally condemn any and all manifestations of bigotry, harassment or violence against Arab-Americans and American Muslims.

We also acknowledge the voice of the anti-war movement that seeks an alternative to military response. We respect the right to dissent about our nation's path, while strongly opposing any anti-American or anti-Israel sentiment in the message. We believe that had America not acted now to eliminate the terrorists' ability to destroy more innocent human lives, the threat to our nation and the entire free world would be substantially greater. We are committed to maintaining a safe haven for diverse views within the Jewish community.

The challenges that confront our nation—and the stakes for our future—are indeed great. We, as a society, have come together in an unprecedented way to rally behind our leaders' determined commitment to win the war on terrorism and to protect our country and the values we cherish. We strongly support this all-important cause.