

## **An American Jewish Statement against Zionism**

(“Statement of the American Council for Judaism,” made on August 30, 1943, and published in *The New York Times* on August 31, 1943, page 4.)

The American Council for Judaism, Inc., was organized to present the views of Americans of Jewish faith on problems affecting the future of their own lives and the lives of World Jewry in the present hour of world confusion.

The Council reaffirms the historic truth that the Jews of the world share common traditions and ethical concepts which find their derivation in the same religious source. For countless generations, “Hear, O Israel, The Lord our God, the Lord is One,” has been the universal cry that united all Jews in trial and tribulation, in suffering, hunger and want, in despair—and in achievement. It is still the concept which distinguishes Jews as a religious group.

Racist theories and nationalist philosophies, that have become prevalent in recent years, have caused untold suffering to the world and particularly to Jews. Long ago they became obsolete as realities in Jewish history; they remain only as a reaction to discrimination and persecution. In the former crises of Israel in ancient Palestine, the Prophets placed God and the moral law above land, race, nation, royal prerogatives and political arrangements. Now, as then, we cherish the same religious values which emphasize the dignity of man and the obligations to deal justly with man no matter what his status.

As Americans of Jewish faith we believe implicitly in the fundamentals of democracy, rooted as they are, in moralities that transcend race and state, and endow the individual with rights for which he is answerable only to God. We are thankful to be citizens of a country and to have shared in the building of a nation conceived in a spirit which knows neither special privilege nor inferior status for any man.

For centuries Jews have considered themselves nationals of those countries in which they have lived. Whenever free to do so, they have assumed, and will again assume, full responsibilities of citizenship in accordance with the ancient Jewish command, “The law of the land is the law.” Those countries in which Jews have lived have been their homes; those land their homelands. In those nations where political action was expressed through minority group, the Jew, following the law of his land, accepted minority status, thereby frequently gaining an improvement over previous conditions of inferior citizenship. Such East European concepts, however, have resulted in a misunderstanding, shared by Jews and non-Jews, a misunderstanding which we seek to dispel. American Jews hope that in the peace for which all of us pray, the old principle of minority rights will be supplanted by the more modern principle of equality and freedom for the individual. The interest of American Jews in the individual Jew in countries where the minority right principle prevailed is not to be confused with acceptance of this East European political concept.

As a result of the bigotry, sadism, and ambitions for world conquest of the Axis powers, millions of our co-religionists who had homes in and were nationals of other lands have been violently deported and made victims of indescribable barbarism. No other group has

been so brutishly attacked and for one reason only—on the false claims that there are racial barriers or nationalistic impulses that separate Jews from other men.

The plight of those Jews together with millions of oppressed fellowmen of all faiths, calls for the profoundest sympathy and the unbounded moral indignation of all free men. The restoration of these broken lives to the status and dignity of men endowed by God with inalienable rights, is one of the primary objectives of the peace to come as expressed in the Atlantic Charter and the Four Freedoms of President Roosevelt. We believe that the Jew will rise or fall with the extension or contraction of the great liberal forces of civilization. By relying upon the broad, religious principles inherent in a democracy and implementing them wherever possible, we join our forces with those of all lovers of freedom; strengthened, in that we do not stand segregated and alone upon exclusive demands.

We ask that the United Nations [the Allies of World War II who opposed the Axis powers, not the international organization that came later] secure the earliest feasible repatriation or resettlement under the best possible conditions of all peoples uprooted from their homes by the Axis powers, and that even in the face of obvious and discouraging obstacles the United Nations persevere in their efforts to provide immediate sanctuary for refugees of all faiths, political beliefs and national origins. We believe that wherever possible the forced emigres should be repatriated in their original homelands under conditions which will enable them to live as free, upstanding individuals.

For our fellow Jews we ask only this: Equality of rights and obligations with their fellow-nationals. In our endeavors to bring relief to our stricken fellow Jews, and to help rebuild their lives on a more stable basis, we rely wholly upon the principles of freedom, justice and humanity, which are fundamental to both democracy and religion, and which have been declared as the principles which shall prevail in the better world for which the United Nations are fighting. We ally ourselves with those who believe this war will not have been fought in vain, that the mistakes of the last peace will not be duplicated.

Palestine has contributed in a tangible way to the alleviation of the present catastrophe in Jewish life by providing refuge for a part of Europe's persecuted Jews. We hope it will continue as one of the places for such resettlement, for it has been clearly demonstrated that practical colonizing can be done, schools and universities built, scientific agriculture extended, commerce intensified and culture developed. This is the record of achievement of eager, hardworking settlers who have been aided in their endeavors by Jews all over the world, in every walk of life and thought.

We oppose the efforts to establish a National Jewish State in Palestine or anywhere else as a philosophy of defeatism, and one which does not offer a practical solution of the Jewish problem. We dissent from all those related doctrines that stress the racialism, the nationalism and the theoretical homelessness of Jews. We oppose such doctrines as inimical to the welfare of Jews in Palestine, in America, or wherever Jews dwell. We believe that the intrusion of Jewish national statehood has been a deterrent in Palestine's ability to play an even greater role in offering a haven for the oppressed, and that without the insistence upon such statehood, Palestine would today be harboring more refugees from

Nazi terror. The very insistence upon a Jewish army has led to the raising of barriers against our unfortunate brethren. There never was a need for such an army. There has always been ample opportunity for Jews to fight side by side with those of other faiths in the armies of the United Nations.

Palestine is a part of Israel's religious heritage, as it is a part of the heritage of two other religions of the world. We look forward to the ultimate establishment of a democratic, autonomous government in Palestine, wherein Jews, Moslems and Christians shall be justly represented; every man enjoying equal rights and sharing equal responsibilities; a democratic government in which our fellow Jews shall be free Palestinians whose religion is Judaism, even as we are Americans whose religion is Judaism.

We invite all Jews to support our interpretation of Jewish life and destiny in keeping with the highest traditions of our faith. We believe these truths provide the basis for every program for a more hopeful future put forth by free men. To proclaim those views at this time, we believe, is to express the abiding faith, shared by a great number of our fellow Jews, that in the fruits of victory of the United Nations all, regardless of faith, will share alike. It is also, we believe, to render a service to the task of clarifying the hopes and the purposes for which this war is being fought by free men everywhere.