

Israel Discourse Advisory Committee

Report to Board of Trustees

January 23, 2018

At its meeting of December 21, the Israel Discourse Advisory Committee (referred to as “IDAC” or “the committee” throughout this report) reviewed the recent experience of Judea's “partnership” with Voice For Israel. The committee underscored the need for caution, and the important role of IDAC, in assessing future proposals for such relationships, including the use of avenues of publicity by the partner organization. The committee reaffirmed that in agreeing to sponsor or co-sponsor an event, JRC should not be viewed as endorsing the goals, activities or political stance of the partner organization.

The committee also reviewed a group of preliminary proposals for Israel-related programs in the coming year submitted by the Adult Education Committee. IDAC's assessment of these was largely favorable, though the committee provided a number of recommendations to the Adult Education Committee as to how the proposals might be strengthened when re-submitted to IDAC in their final form. In particular, with regard to a proposal for a presentation by Mohammad Eid, a Rotary Peace Fellow at UNC who is originally from Gaza, the committee requested greater specificity as to the topic and content of Mr. Eid's presentation and asked that reference be made to the Israel Discourse Policy in further planning discussions with Mr. Eid. The committee also noted the "left-leaning" character of the proposals as a whole and called for the addition of some Israel-related programming to the right of the political center in order to achieve greater overall balance.

At its meeting of January 16, the committee was briefed on the status of the Israel web page. The page is nearing completion, and will feature an introductory landing page, a draft of which Rabbi Bach has provided. The landing page will include links to other items in the web page and a unique email address through which congregants may contact IDAC. Visuals of a neutral character will also be a feature of the web page.

As of the January 16 meeting, the committee had not received the further information it requested from the Adult Education Committee regarding its proposal for a presentation by Mohammad Eid. The committee is hopeful that once it receives greater detail as to the topic and content of Mr. Eid's presentation and an indication that Mr. Eid has been apprised of the Israel Discourse Policy it will be able to proceed with approval for this event.

The committee reaffirmed its position that while the sponsoring of Israel-related events by entities within JRC is a matter for its approval, Jewish events in the wider community may be publicized in the synagogue's e-notices in the section reserved for such information without its approval but with an appropriate disclaimer. The disclaimer will indicate that the use of JRC's publicity avenues does not imply JRC's sponsorship or endorsement of the event in question. A similar disclaimer will also be used in connection with printed publicity such as fliers. Using this approach, JRC publicity avenues may be employed, as requested, to publicize the upcoming StandWithUs event with Ilan Lopez and the March 1 Ella Shohat lecture to Carolina Jewish Studies.

In response to reluctance expressed by the Adult Education Committee about providing greater political balance in its programming, the committee reaffirmed the importance of offering Israel-related

programming across the political spectrum. Accordingly, it reiterated its position calling for the addition by the Adult Education Committee of some Israel-related programming to the right of the political center in order to achieve greater overall balance. Recognizing that the Adult Education Committee finds this goal to be challenging, the committee expressed that IDAC and its members can be helpful through their guidance and suggestions but that planning and implementation toward more balanced programming remain the responsibility of the Adult Education Committee. Among the suggested resources that the Adult Education Committee might use in identifying potential speakers in the area having a right-leaning perspective are AIPAC, the Jewish National Fund, and the Israeli American Council.

The committee gave its approval for a proposal submitted by the Adult Education Committee for a panel discussion on white supremacy and Jewish relationship to whiteness. Although the proposal was not made with specific reference to Israel, it is important to recognize that the discussion could turn toward racial issues in Israel. The event should be planned carefully, with an appreciation for the complexity of the topic, a view toward balance in the composition of the panel, and the use of a format (such as the use of index cards for questions) that will assure a civil dialogue.

The committee gave careful consideration to the question that had been brought to it recently as to whether the JRC gift shop might be used as a distribution location for Narrow Bridge Candles, an organization that describes itself as a “Jewish ritual candlemaking project in support of the full Palestinian call for Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions of Israel (BDS).” The committee recognizes that a broad range of products, representing a diversity of companies, may appropriately be sold in the JRC gift shop. However, in light of the fact that the sale of candles is intended specifically to raise funds in support of Narrow Bridge Candle's political position, which many consider to be extreme, the committee determined that the use of the gift shop as a distribution point for this product is not appropriate.

Submitted by Norman Loewenthal, Committee Chair