

Jewish Unity for a Just Peace International Gathering in Chicago May 4-6, 2001

Contact and Registration Information: <http://www.junity.org>

Dear friend of peace and justice:

I am writing to invite you to join us at the *Jewish Unity for a Just Peace* gathering, that will take place on May 4-6, 2001 in Chicago, Illinois, USA.

What is *Jewish Unity for a Just Peace*?

Jewish Unity for a Just Peace is an international gathering of grassroots Jewish activists who support a just, viable and lasting peace based on the principles of international law, requiring a complete end to Israel's occupation of the West Bank, East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip.

We are coming together in Chicago in order to explore ways to coordinate the efforts of the many Jewish organizations working for a just and lasting peace between Israelis and Palestinians. While our primary focus will be on education, action and activities in the United States and Canada, we welcome activists from around the world to join in our efforts.

We recognize that there will be a broad spectrum of political views and beliefs as to the best solution for the region and the most effective strategies for achieving peace and justice. We view such diversity of opinion as an asset to our collective efforts, even as we realize that our success in influencing American public opinion and changing US policy towards Israel requires that we work cooperatively.

We intend to keep the speeches and presentations to a minimum and focus instead on analysis of the challenges we face, and sharing resources, ideas and the excitement of working for justice with many others. We want to come out of the weekend with very concrete plans for national coordination of action and activities.

Challenge and Opportunity

We face both a major challenge and significant opportunity in 2001. Israel has tightened its siege on Palestinian communities in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and increased its use of collective punishment to accomplish its objectives. The US and international corporate media present a very distorted perspective of the reality of Israel's occupation. Mainstream American Jewish organizations promote an uncritical support of Israel that is both dangerous and disingenuous.

We must make it clear that there are many Jews who disagree with Israel's policies toward the Palestinians, who want to see an end to human rights abuses of Palestinians,

an end to the occupation of the Palestinian territories, and a reversal of the self-destructive settlement policy that Israel has pursued for decades.

We are critical of these policies not despite, but because of, our Jewish ethical commitments and our deep concern for Israeli and Palestinian lives and well-being. Our Jewish ethical values demand that we seek justice and pursue it – for ourselves and for all those with whom we live.

We believe that together, with the cooperation of the thousands of activists throughout North America and elsewhere, we can work to influence American and Israeli policy for the benefit of all peoples in the Middle East. Together, activist Jews must unite in support of a new ethical and political project. Now is the time for us to meet one another, to discuss our common concerns and our differences, and to forge ways in which we can work together. Now is the time for us to break the lock that a few, well-funded, narrowly focused, pro-Israel advocacy groups have maintained over Jewish public opinion on matters concerning Israel and the cause of peace.

Now is the time for those who have felt unrepresented by such mainstream groups to organize ourselves, and to *speak out together*.

Join us and magnify your impact

We hope you as an individual or member of a group, and/or other members of your organization, will be able to join us for this international meeting of Jews seeking to end the occupation and build a national grassroots network. We invite you to participate at all levels of planning and participation, and we encourage you to tell your friends and colleagues about our upcoming gathering. If you wish to participate, please read the following proposals for next steps.

Please visit <http://www.junity.org> and fill out the registration form for the Jewish Unity gathering. You can find lots more information about the event at our web site, including details on housing, registration fees and other conference logistics. Even if you are not able to join us, please register so that we can provide you with updates and add you to our growing list of activists.

If you have questions or want to discuss the meeting, please do not hesitate to contact me or any member of the Organizing Committee (see list below).

For a lasting and just peace,
Steven Feuerstein

steven@notinmyname.org or 773.454.8397

on behalf of the members of the Organizing Committee and Advisory Council

Organizing Committee of Jewish Unity for a Just Peace (in formation)

Steven Feuerstein, Not In My Name, Chicago

Cindy Levitt, Not In My Name, Chicago

Lincoln Shlensky, A Jewish Voice for Peace, San Francisco

Adam Gutride, A Jewish Voice for Peace, San Francisco
Mitchell Plitnick, A Jewish Voice For Peace, San Francisco
Laurie Zimmerman, Israel-Palestine Working Group / Jews Uniting for Social Justice, Philadelphia
Andrea Jacobs, Israel-Palestine Working Group / Jews Uniting for Social Justice, Philadelphia
Judith Kolokoff, Northwest Coalition for a Just Peace
Frank Rosenthal, Lafayette Committee for Israeli/Palestinian Peace and Justice
Gila Svirsky, The Coalition of Women for a Just Peace, Jerusalem
Jeff Halper, Israel Committee Against House Demolitions
Donna Spiegelman, Workmen's Circle/Arbeter Ring, Boston Chapter*
Joel Beinin, Professor of Middle East History, Stanford University*
Jordan Elgrably, Open Tent Middle East Coalition, Los Angeles
M.C. Ettinger, Coalition of Jews for Justice in Israel and Palestine, San Francisco
Marcia Freedman, Israeli Women's Coalition for a Just Peace
Rabbi Rebecca Lillian, Jewish Peace Forum, Chicago*
Meir Amor, Yosher, Toronto
Sarah Anne Minkin, SUSTAIN*, Washington, DC
Jeffrey Adam Sacks, activist, Columbia University*, New York City

Advisory Council of Jewish Unity for a Just Peace (in formation)

Rabbi Michael Lerner, *Tikkun**
Hilla Dayan, Israeli human rights activist
Yifat Susskind, MADRE*
Cherie Brown, Break the Silence Campaign*, Washington, DC
Rabbi Burt Jacobson, Kehilla Community Synagogue*
Barbara Lubin, Middle East Children's Alliance
Arnold Jacob Wolf, Rabbi Emeritus, K.A.M. Isaiah Israel Congregation*, Chicago
Sandor and Faye Straus, Firedoll Foundation*
Clare Kinberg, *Bridges**, Eugene, OR
Yvonne Deutsch, Women in Black*, Israel
Maxine Kaufman-Lacusta, Vancouver Campaign for Secure Dwellings Committee*
Letty Cottin Pogrebin, founding editor, *Ms.* magazine; past president, Americans for Peace Now; current president, the Authors Guild*
Rabbi Lynn Gottlieb, Congregation Nahalat Shalom*, co-founder of Arab-Jewish Dialogue of New Mexico*, Albuquerque
Professor Naomi Seidman, Graduate Theological Union*, Berkeley
Reena Bernards, diversity trainer, Washington, DC
Hilda Silverman, Jewish Women for Justice in Israel/Palestine*, Boston
Professor Tanya Reinhart, linguist, columnist, Israel
Professor Rebecca Stein, Coalition of Jews for Justice*, Berkeley
Ira Grupper, former national co-chair, New Jewish Agenda (NJA)*, Louisville
Rabbi David Seidenberg
Rabbi Rebecca T. Alpert

* Organization listed for identification purposes only