

[This statement was drafted on May 14, 2021 by a collective of Jewish Yale students and alumni in solidarity with Yale Students4Palestine to demand accountability from our institutions and peers.]

For thousands of years, Jews have faced systematic persecution, displacement, and extermination. Our long history of struggle and resistance, as well as our core values of *tzedek* (justice) and *tikun olam* (bettering the world) compel us to stand against all forms of racism and oppression, especially the violence of Israel against Palestinians. Over the past few weeks we've watched with horror as Israeli settlers attempt to expel Palestinian families from the neighborhood of Sheikh Jarrah in occupied East Jerusalem. When the residents of Sheikh Jarrah resisted expulsion, Israeli settlers responded with violence, attacking them as they celebrated Iftar. Only a day later, Israeli police opened fire on Palestinian worshippers in the Al-Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, injuring hundreds. Now, Israel has responded with excessive and brutal force to Hamas rockets, targeting civilians in apartment buildings and killing more people in Gaza over the past week than Hamas rockets have killed in the past 20 years. Meanwhile, settler mobs roam the streets of Haifa, Lyd, and other Israeli cities, lynching Palestinians and destroying Palestinian-owned businesses in a campaign reminiscent of the state-backed pogroms Jews have faced throughout our history. As of May 14th, Israel has killed over 122 people, including 31 children, and injured more than 900. And yet this month's events are only the most recent episode in a long history of violent dispossession of Palestinians, as tomorrow will mark 73 years since the Nakba or "catastrophe" associated with the creation of Israel, when Zionist forces ethnically cleansed and destroyed 530 Palestinian villages and killed about 15,000 Palestinians, making at least 750,000 out of 1.9 million Palestinians refugees.

As a concerned group of Jewish Yalies, we call upon our peers to speak out against the atrocities committed against the Palestinian people supposedly on our behalf and in the name of our faith. We demand that our fellow Jews end the stigma around Palestine and challenge their families, schools, and synagogues to oppose Israel's violence. We implore the American Jewish establishment to stop conflating Jewish identity with the state of Israel and to condemn Israel's systematic human rights violations. And we ask all Americans of conscience to demand that their government end its \$3.8 billion in annual, unconditional foreign aid to Israel. By design, Israeli apartheid towards Palestinians echoes American violence towards Indigenous people, Black people, and global victims of U.S. imperialism.

We also direct our demands towards the Joseph Slifka Center for Jewish Life at Yale, a place where most of us have felt unwelcome since noticing its display of the Israeli flag on Wall Street. We unequivocally reject its culture of silence around Palestine, which makes support for Israel an implicit prerequisite for Jewish community on campus. We also condemn its institutional support for Yale fellowships and Birthright trips to Israel, opportunities designed to bolster Israeli nationalism and erase Palestinians and their struggles. This conflation of Judaism and Zionism is especially harmful for Jewish students that did not have strong cultural or religious upbringings; we are offered a myopic path toward building a Jewish identity—framed solely around Slifka's views towards Israel—and when we do not find community, it's easy to give up. Yale's entire Jewish community suffers as a result.

We are outraged by Slifka and our university's response to this present crisis. It is time for Slifka leaders and the Yale administration at large to acknowledge their complicity in the Israeli occupation. Instead, the message that was sent out to the Jewish community on May 12th ignored the asymmetrical nature of violence between Israel and Palestine, the ways that Israeli policy has precluded peace and advanced hatred, and the plight of Palestinians expelled from their homes and communities. It relied upon the vague language of "fear," "confusion," and "bridging distances," rather than establishing facts. It asked us to offer a "prayer for the State of Israel" even though it is Israeli forces and settlers terrorizing Palestinians right now. We demand increased transparency on how Yale and Slifka are potentially invested in this ongoing state-sanctioned violence through grants, investments, and other potential sources.

To this effect, we call upon Slifka and Yale University to divest from and cut ties with businesses complicit in or profiting from the Israeli occupation of Palestine. We affirm our support for the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement and its demands that Israel (1) end the occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantles the Separation Wall; (2) recognize the fundamental rights of and grants full equality to Arab-Palestinian citizens; and (3) allow for Palestinian refugees to return to the homes and properties from which they were expelled in 1948 as stipulated in UN Resolution 194. And we encourage everyone to participate in this Palestinian-led movement, inspired by opposition to South African apartheid, as it is one of the most effective grassroots tactics to oppose Israel.

Finally, we envision a Judaism that is inherently anti-racist and anti-Zionist, and we reject the conflation of Zionism with Judaism that labels anti-Zionism as anti-Semitic. We will not allow our Jewishness and our history of struggle to be weaponized in order to commit pogroms, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. Instead, we offer the concept of *doikayt*, a Yiddish socialist idea meaning 'hereness.' We must fight for our right to thrive right here where we are—a Jewish life that does not legitimize the displacement and ethnic cleansing of any other group in the name of our own "security." We believe the most secure future for the Jewish people is not through any settler colonial project, but through solidarity with other oppressed groups, fighting to abolish racism and transform our world.

We invite all Yale-affiliated Jews to join us in this effort and add their names below by using this form: <https://forms.gle/4g97XdjLx91wqu257>

Ryan Gittler-Muñiz YC '20
Oren Schweitzer YC '23
Leah Smith YC '20
Ella Fanger YC '22
Rebecca Wessel YC '24
Ryan Seffinger YC '19
Kapp Singer YC '23
Nora Massie YC '22
Rebecca Goldberg YC '22

Danny Kaplowitz YC '22
Nash Keyes YC '21
Callie Benson-Williams YC '23
Susannah Beyl YC '20
George Mandel YC '24
Caroline Magavern YC '21
Talia YC '21
Jordan Schmolka YC '20
Ella Lubin YC '24
Anna Tender YC '22
Hannah Srajer GSAS '25
Alie Brussel Faria YC '22
Steven David Cohen GSAS '26
Adam Waters GSAS '24
James Brandfonbrener YC '22
Eliya Ahmad YC '23.5
Ally Soong YC '22
Gall Sigler YC '23
Stephanie Frank Singer HC '85
Josie Steuer Ingall YC '24
Madeline Sachs YC '19
Payson Whitwell YC '20
Joshua Gutterman Tranen YC '18
Jonathan Weiss YC '20
Leo Lehrer-Small YC '23
Georgia Michelman YC '22
Addison Beer YC '23
Adin Ring YC '23
Andrew Weitzman YC '23
Eli Baum YC '19
Isabel Sands YC '21
Gabe Acheson YC '16
Elka Wade YC '23
Carson Menkes YC '22
Avi Cohen YC '22
Gabriel Roy YC '21
gray golding YC '18
Caroline Reed YC '24
Rose Taylor YC '18
Sky Gavis-Hughson YC '19
Eliza Kravitz YC '24
Raffa Levy YC '24
Ellie Singer YC '22
Joseph Zailaa YC '26

Andrew Kornfeld YC '24
Viktor Kagan YC '24
Ben Metzner YC '23
Jonas Kilga YC '23
Noa Rosinplotz YC '23
Charlie Loitman YC '23
Josh Vogel YC '22
Sarah Mele YC '20
Moses Goren YC '22
Natalie Semmel YC '25
Jordan Cutler-Tietjen YC '20
Isaac Kirk-Davidoff YC '18
Yahel Matalon GSAS '21
Ben Grobman YC '21
Daniel Kaylor YC '20
Rachel Suss YC '20
Max Teirstein YC '21
Elliot Lewis YC '23
Ben Levin YC '20
Alex Cohen YC '21
Jacqueline "Jax" Blaska YC '20
Samara Angel YC '21
Sarah Rose YC '17
Michaela Feinberg GSAS '25
meg guzulescu YC '19
Rachel Cohen YC '21
Matt Nadel YC '21
Sabrina Black, YC '22
Sophia Durney YC '22
Michael Gancz YC '22
Paul Seltzer GSAS '23
Lucy Sternbach YC '19
Lia Eggleston YC '22
Sarah Eppler-Epstein YLS '21
Julia Geiger YLS '21
Zoe Masters YLS '22
Matt Kellner YLS '21
Hero Magnus YC '23
Caleb Cohen YC '21
Sam Kuhn YLS '21
Arabelle Schoenberg YC '19
Kat Berman YC '20
Gabriel Rainey YC '20
Charlie Musoff YC '20

Lucia Somberg YC '02
Walker Caplan YC '20
Scott W. Stern YC '15, YLS '20
Rachel Calnek-Sugin YC '19
Fiona Drenttel YC '20
Emilia V. Fernández YC '23
Stephen Osserman YC '02, MUS '03
Jack Hilder YC '19
Shira Inbar ART '14
Yael Caplan YLS '23
Raphael Orleck-Jetter YC '21
Al Larriva-Latt YC '21
Miranda Rector YC'20 YSPH'22
Ann Sarnak, YLS 2023
Danny Hirschel-Burns GSAS '23
Eva Gerber '19
Stav Dror M.Arch II '22
Colin Eisler YC '52, Robert Lehman Professor at NYU IFA
Alan Levine YLS '62