

7th December 2011

Dear [REDACTED]

As the Chief Executive of JNF UK, I note that you are a signatory to EDM 1667, which welcomes the Stop the JNF campaign and its founders, including the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign. We are particularly concerned at the legitimacy granted to this campaign by the EDM, not solely because of its aim to tarnish the work of the JNF, but also because of the campaign's links to far-Right, far-Left and religious supremacists.

I am sure that you are willing to hear the facts, and I would be delighted to meet with you so that we may discuss the matter further.

Here are two examples of the sorts of ideas and persons that keep the Stop the JNF campaign running. The first is Joel Kovel, an American academic and contributor to the Stop the JNF journal, and of whom an anti-racism group within the Green Party has noted is:

...somebody who admits, in the prologue to his book 'Overcoming Zionism', to being stricken with an anti-Jewish worldview: "...my quarrel with Judaism took shape about the themes of chauvinism and entitlement, and in this way extended to the critique of Zionism. The antipathy began viscerally in the Synagogue and at my aunt's funeral, and over the years, grew into a worldview" (p.6)

The second example to consider is the founding member of Stop the JNF: the Scottish Palestine Solidarity Campaign (SPSC), whose leader, Mike Napier, has written that the murder of eight Jewish children in Jerusalem was justified, and cited Israel Shahak as his source, an ideologue who provides well-documented inspiration for the ex-KKK leader David Duke and members of the neo-Nazi organisation Stormfront.

Furthermore, the SPSC offers a free book to all new members: Shlomo Sand's 'The Invention of the Jewish People' - a book whose central argument posits that the Jewish people, as a single collectivity, do not exist. The SPSC also recently supported Paul Donnachie, a student at St. Andrews University in Scotland, who was charged and found guilty of racially abusing a Jewish student. Despite the ruling, the SPSC continue to voice their support for Donnachie's actions.



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Finally, the anti-racism organisation Engage has noted that SPSC member John Wight recently recommended an extremist far-right website called codoh.com – the 'Committee for Open Debate on the Holocaust', and wrote the following accompanying note:

"As soon as the scales fall from the eyes of international Jewry with regard to the racist and fascist ideology that is Zionism, the world will begin to emerge from the iron heel of war and brutality in the Middle East."

I wish these were the only issues that blemish the Stop the JNF campaign, but unfortunately these are just a few examples taken from an entire spectrum of illiberalism, hate-speech and extremism.

I am certain that no politician would wish to welcome such a collection of persons and the accompanied bigotry, and, in this respect, it is not as Chief Executive of JNF UK that I voice my anxiety; rather it is as a member of the Jewish community.

I understand that you have concerns in relation to the work of the JNF. I believe these concerns to be the result of misleading lobbying and agitprop whose proponents have taken a great deal of care to hide their bona fide agenda.

In particular, Stop the JNF draws attention to the plight of the Bedouin in Israel. The conclusions drawn provide an entirely false representation of JNF UK's work, and the issues affecting Israel's Bedouin population.

Every free society has to deal with the problems relating to private property that arise from the movements of travellers, but unlike the people of Dale Farm in the UK, Israel's Bedouin are given a great deal of help by the Israeli state. Stop the JNF paints a picture of serious persecution afflicting the Bedouin people; however, this could not be more untrue. These once-nomadic people now participate fully in Israeli life, a truth to which the Bedouins in the Parliament, military and civil service would quite happily attest.

The Israeli state has made extensive efforts to encourage the permanent settlement of the Bedouin in recent years. It has done so by building additional towns in the Negev to smooth the transition to permanent settlement, planning for individual tribes and constructing urban, suburban and agricultural settlements by need. The largest of these towns, Rahat, established in 1972, is now home to around 52,000 Bedouins. Israel is now building thirteen new villages, towards which it has earmarked 1 billion NIS. This represents a significant improvement in the Bedouin's quality of living after their semi-permanent dwellings, as in the new villages, the state is able to connect sewage, electricity and water networks.

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Furthermore, Israel provides financial incentives in the form of grants and benefits, which are not means-tested, for Bedouins to leave the dispersion. The state also awards compensation far in excess of the value of the illegal structures without requiring documentary evidence of title. Families are each given free land and exemptions from development costs, in addition to relocation grants of thousands of shekels per head. No such entitlements are awarded to the rest of Israel's population.

JNF UK recently helped to build a medical centre in Arad, which has benefitted the Bedouin population greatly. We may be a Jewish organisation, but we help all of Israel's citizens.

Some may disagree with the use of positive action to help minorities, but in Israel, equality for all is not just an ideal; it is a determined reality.

It is for this reason that I take great pride in my position as chief executive of JNF UK. Our work transcends conflict and politics, and so I would hope, as one of the most important charities within the Jewish community, we will be able to count on the support of all those who seek a free, prosperous and sustainable Middle East

As mentioned, I am most keen to meet so that we may discuss the issues that arise out of EDM 1667, as well as the question of how we, here in the UK, can best support the prospect of peace.

Yours sincerely,
David Goodman

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