

43 Assembly, 2001 SEEKING PEACE

"Seek peace.... and pursue it"

Issue

To promote Israel's quest for peace amidst the changing Middle East scene.

Background

The prospect of peace so hopefully expressed in the resolution of the 42nd Assembly has all but vanished with the Palestinian uprising and America's War on Terrorism. Today Israel is under attack by an enraged Palestinian populace that has taken to the streets to prevent any steps forward in peace negotiations. Their assaults and suicide bomber attacks on Israelis have led to hundreds of deaths and prompted retaliatory raids in the West Bank and Gaza leaving large numbers of casualties. Without action by the Palestinian Authority to eliminate terrorism against Israel it is extremely difficult and unrealistic for Israel to negotiate toward peace.

Recent events including the September 11 terrorist attack on the World Trade Center in New York City and the Palestinian uprising have exposed the extent of the state-sponsored or supported hate propaganda that floods the airwaves and the schools in the Middle East. Generations of Palestinians are growing up filled with lies and prejudice against Israel making the future of peaceful coexistence very dim indeed.

One of the outcomes of the September 11 terrorist attacks has been the upsurge in hate crimes and acts of prejudice against Muslims and Arab individuals living in North America. Most of these are citizens living and working in North America for many years and are eager to separate themselves from fanatical positions. This may open up opportunities for Sisterhoods to reach out to the Muslim and Arab communities to build relationships based on shared values of freedom of religion and human rights.

In 2000 the Union of American Hebrew Congregations launched the campaign "Seeking Peace, Pursuing Justice" to educate, encourage and mobilize North American Jewry to support the peace process and social justice issues in Israel. The campaign makes information available through print, the Internet and speakers to enhance the Reform movement's knowledge of the myriad issues that need to be addressed for peace to be achieved.

Resolution

In recognition of our continuing support for Israel and its peace negotiations, Women of Reform Judaism calls on its North American Sisterhoods to:

1. Offer educational programs on the history of the founding of the State of Israel so members can respond knowledgeably to propaganda and lies about Israel;
2. Speak out forthrightly in support of Israel as it seeks an acceptable resolution of hostilities;

3. Seek out opportunities for dialog with Muslims and Arab individuals living in North America interested in building communities of shared concerns; and
4. Participate in the UAHC program, "Seeking Peace, Pursuing Justice," to educate members and others on the critical issues facing Israeli society in its search for peace.