



May 15, 2019

**VIA EMAIL AND FIRST-CLASS MAIL**

Board of Trustees  
Highland Park Public Library  
31 N 5th Avenue  
Highland Park, NJ 08904

Dear President Basofin and Honorable Members of the Board of Trustees:

We write on behalf of the Zionist Organization of America (ZOA), the oldest and one of the largest pro-Israel organizations in the U.S., whose mission includes fighting anti-Semitism and anti-Israel bias wherever they exist.

Members of the Highland Park community contacted us with deep concerns about a planned book reading at the Highland Park Public Library by the author of a children's book called *P is for Palestine*. We appreciate that you listened to and respected their concerns by canceling the book reading until you could consider, at your May 20 meeting, whether it should proceed.

After reviewing the book, we strongly urge you not to permit the book reading to go forward at the library. The book promotes and praises violence. It will misinform and mislead children, instead of encouraging tolerance and understanding. And it will service the hateful agenda of an extremist anti-Israel group, rather than the [mission](#) of the Highland Park Public Library to be a community resource "where everyone feels welcome."

***P is for Palestine Encourages Violence and Will Misinform Children***

*P is for Palestine* is a "Palestine alphabet book" that covers each letter of the alphabet, together with a corresponding word. For the letter I, the book states: "I is for Intifada, Intifada is Arabic for rising up for what is right, if you are a kid or a grownup!"

That may be the benign and inspirational definition that anti-Semites and Israel-bashers would ascribe to the word intifada. But in fact, Palestinian Arab intifadas are heinous, murderous uprisings that purposefully target Israelis and Jews, including children. Palestinian Arab intifadas against Israelis and Jews include hand grenade attacks, rocket attacks, assaults with guns and explosives, and suicide bombings on buses, in restaurants, shopping malls and other public places. More than [200 Israelis were killed](#) and [over 3000 were injured](#) during the Palestinian Arabs' First Intifada (1987-1993). Approximately [1100 Israelis were killed and 8000 were wounded](#) during the Second Intifada (2000-2005).

In short, an intifada is not a “rising up for what is right,” as *P is for Palestine* erroneously and outrageously states. An intifada is a murderous campaign of terrorism that wreaks devastation and fear on innocent people. The Highland Park Public Library should play no part in promoting lies about the meaning of intifada, and in glorifying Palestinian Arab violence against Israelis and Jews.

### The Book Reading Would Serve the Mission of a Hate Group, Not the Community

Book readings at the library are supposed to be in service of the community. But this particular book reading is solely in service of the hateful, anti-Israel agenda of a group that calls itself “Jewish Voice for Peace.” JVP is behind the scheduling of this book reading and it is the group that continues to push for it. JVP may have an innocuous and even appealing name, but the Anti-Defamation League has appropriately [described](#) it as “a radical anti-Israel activist group” that “considers supporters of Israel, or even critics of Israel who do not hew to JVP’s own extreme views, to be complicit in Israel’s purported acts of racist oppression of Palestinians.”

Please don’t be fooled by [JVP’s attempt](#) to paint this book reading in the most appealing light – that it will be a “family event” that will “foster cross-cultural enrichment, tolerance, and conflict management for children.” The book reading will do nothing of the sort. JVP’s purported concern for children does not extend to the Israeli and Jewish children who have endured and continued to be threatened by Arab terrorism.

### JVP Embraces and Honors Killers of Innocent Jews

Here is one example: Rasmia Odeh is a Palestinian Arab terrorist convicted of murdering two innocent young college students in a 1969 supermarket bombing in Israel. After she was released from prison in a prisoner exchange, Odeh made her way to the U.S. She was eventually convicted and deported for concealing her terrorist crimes on her U.S. immigration forms. Instead of condemning and shunning a terrorist murderer of innocent Jews, JVP embraced and honored Odeh. Before she was deported, JVP [proudly invited](#) her to speak at its national membership meeting in 2017.

Relying on the American Library Association’s Bill of Rights, JVP will also try to persuade you that objectors to this book reading are trying to “shut down dialog.” That’s a lie, too.

The very first principle of the [Bill of Rights](#) states: “Books and other library resources should be provided for the interest, information, and enlightenment of all people of the community the library serves.” A book that misinforms and misleads children into believing that Palestinian Arab terrorism against Israelis and Jews is not only acceptable but also desirable, inspirational and heroic does nothing to inform, enlighten or encourage dialogue.

Not every book is worthy of a book reading at the library. We cannot imagine that you would endorse a reading of a children’s alphabet book about the Civil War that paired the letter “S” with the word “slavery” and described it as a practice in the South where slaves were well-treated and happy. That’s an egregious lie, as is the meaning ascribed to “intifada” in *P is for Palestine*.

The Book Reading Would Violate the Library's Mission

Hosting this book reading would violate the Highland Park Public Library's mission to be a community resource, a place that is accessible and welcoming to everyone. Moreover, the library is supposed to "build community by creating connections among Highland Park's diverse populations." The very idea of this book reading has already divided, offended and hurt many members of the community. Going forward with the book reading would cause considerably more division, pain and harm.

There are many programs that the library can host that will truly build community, instead of destroying it. This program is not one of them. The ZOA strongly urges you not to permit a book reading of *P is for Palestine* at the Highland Park Public Library.

Thank you for considering our concerns. We are happy to provide you with more information and hope you will consider us a resource.

Very truly yours,



Morton A. Klein  
National President



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