

I'm Maurice Naftalin, a founder and organiser of Liberal Jews for Justice in Israel/Palestine (LJJIP), a grassroots network of Jews in one of Britain's main synagogue federations. LJJIP's values are focused on social justice and universal human rights in the whole area of historic Palestine. We declare for "freedom, security, democracy and dignity" for everyone, Jews and Palestinians alike, no matter what political framework they live in. Many of us have attended the demonstrations in Edinburgh and here, week in and week out. and have been long-standing allies of the Palestinian liberation movement. Jews supporting the demos include members of the Edinburgh Jewish community Sukkat Shalom, and of Na'amod, the organisation whose yellow banners you can see here.

Let me start by stating our common ground with everyone here: we hate the injustice that the Palestinian people have suffered over the past century or more; we're unalterably opposed to making millions of people live under a seeming endless military occupation; we're horrified at the cruelty of the IDF operation in Gaza and the resulting suffering and deaths, and we join everyone here in calling for an immediate ceasefire and the resumption of realistic humanitarian aid.

So we're here in solidarity. But what about the wider Jewish community in Scotland and the UK? Previous Jewish speakers on the Saturday demos have spoken about the strong connection between the Palestinian struggle for liberation and the call of prophetic Judaism for peace and justice. LJJIP is here in solidarity with them and with the many Jewish groupings in Britain – and in Israel too – who speak out against the actions of the Israeli government. But right now, not enough British Jews are speaking out in this way.

That doesn't mean that they all unconditionally support the Israeli government and its onslaught on Gaza – some do, but there is also deep unease and real opposition amongst British Jews: this week alone, one of the mainstream Jewish youth movements has called for an immediate ceasefire, and the senior rabbi of a mainstream Jewish denomination has spoken out against an attack on Rafah, speaking of his "horror" at the "unimaginable suffering" that it would cause. For us, these are the first very significant cracks in the façade of communal support for Israeli actions. But still many don't speak out. Why not?

The reasons are too complex to explore in a five-minute speech. But I have to tell you that they do include a deep and genuine fear of antisemitism, antisemitism which may often be imagined but is sometimes very real in Britain today. That fear is used by the official Jewish leadership, by Israeli propaganda, and by a hostile media, to keep Jews in line.

And that's a problem not just for us, your allies in the Jewish community, but for the whole movement. This movement is not antisemitic, but our enemies

will always try to portray it as though it is. So neutralising the charge of antisemitism is really important. That's why support from within the Jewish community matters so much: when a Jewish youth movement calls for a ceasefire, who can label them as antisemites? We want to encourage such powerful actions in any we can!

So what I'm asking now is not only ethically right but also practically vital. Let's not leave room for a hostile media to portray this movement as antisemitic. Sometimes what you don't say can be as important as what you do say. Here are two examples:

- 1st, Sexual violence and the killing of unarmed civilians is wrong under any circumstances. So not explicitly rejecting what happened to Jewish people on October 7th *can* look like a statement in itself. Don't let them portray this movement as making that statement!
- 2nd, Ethnic cleansing is wrong under any circumstances. So calling for a free Palestine without asserting the right to continued existence of the seven million Jews, now living between the river and the sea, *can* look like a statement in itself. Don't let them portray this movement as making that statement!

Let's reject these unspoken statements and so neutralise this weapon of theirs, that drives away so many people, not only Jews, who might otherwise come to support our call for peace, justice, and the protection of innocents, Jews and Palestinians alike.

I don't have a formula to end this long oppression and bring justice and freedom to everyone between the river and the sea. In the end, I believe that it's for the people who live there to decide their own future. I'm not one of those people, so all I can do is to raise my voice against the bitter injustices of occupation, war, and ethnic cleansing. I want to be part of a movement that does that, bringing together everyone who stands for justice, whatever their religion or nationality, united in opposing violence, oppression, and ethnic and religious supremacy, a movement that will be a force for a future *for everyone* of peace, equality, justice and freedom.

Ceasefire now!

Justice for Palestinian refugees!

Peace and security for all between the river and the sea!