

BAY AREA WOMEN IN BLACK

As Jews and Americans, we gather with our allies for our communal Tashlich, the Jewish ritual casting-off-into-moving-waters of the past year's faults and misdeeds. At this sacred time, we cast off our part in the inhumane violence that endangers and degrades the lives of the peoples of the Middle East: Palestinians and Israelis, Afghanistanis and Iraqis.

As Bay Area Women in Black, we support the long term well-being of the peoples of Israel and Palestine and oppose the militarization of conflict as well as racism in all its forms, remembering the words of U.S. Rabbi Abraham Joshua Heschel that "in a free society, where terrible wrongs exist, some are guilty, all are responsible."

We cast off ways we have not actively opposed our government's strong support of policies which have maintained Israel's occupation of Palestinian lands. We cast off our inaction against related policies of disruptive and humiliating check points throughout Palestine, house demolitions, targeted assassinations and the taking of political prisoners without proof of guilt, denying them access to legal counsel.

We cast off our inaction against the horrific suicide bombings in Israel that have claimed the lives of many innocent people, including women and children.

We cast off our silence concerning the Separation Wall, erected to divide the peoples of Israel from the peoples of Palestine, an action that disobeys the commandment "Be loving to your neighbor as one like yourself." This wall slices through the West Bank, appropriates vital water resources, confiscates thousands of dunums of Palestinian land and separates people under extreme duress from the fields and orchards their families have worked for generations. Although we understand that Israeli citizens also feel under siege and want to protect themselves, we oppose this unjust and confining wall because, as planned and thus far constructed, it increases hatred and frustration instead of moving towards the just peace so desired by most of the people of the region.

Because international diplomacy at this time has come to a discouraging halt as the positions recently put forth in the "road map" are being ignored, we cast off the fear and frustration that might keep us from remembering that each individual action informs a larger collective one which has the force to bring about necessary change.

For more information contact Bayareawomeninblack@earthlink.net

As Diaspora Jews and allies, then, let us renew our energy for creating such change, and take courage from the Jerusalem Link, a collaborative organization of Israeli and Palestinian feminists devoted to peace; from the Israeli high-schoolers and reservists who are refusing to serve in the Occupied Territories and the 27 Israeli Air Force reservist pilots who have refused to carry out targeted killings; from hundreds of Israeli religious young people who are encouraging Israel to withdraw from the Territories; and from Israeli and Palestinian peace activists, some of whom are rebuilding Palestinian homes, some who are bringing humanitarian aid to towns and people under siege, and some who are building alliances of trust and equality with each other.

In these days of releasing our misdeeds, let us all examine the fears that may drive us to separate from, blame, and dehumanize one another. Let us instead embrace our common humanity, feel our deep connections with one another, and build bridges of mutual respect, creating pathways to peace.

Let us rekindle our faith that even in these times each one of our actions makes a difference. Let us support the US government in its recent attempts to insist that the path of the Wall be changed or that loan guarantees will be withheld. In light of the fact that Israel presently has responded to US demands by freezing existing plans for continuing the Wall and suspending new contracts for construction, let us urge continued negotiations.

Please fax or call:

President George W. Bush

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White House Comment Line:
202-456-1111

Secretary of State Colin Powell

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For more information about the wall, visit Gush Shalom, <http://gush-shalom.org/thewall>

Bay Area Women in Black are Jewish feminists and allies. We stand in solidarity with Women in Black in Israel and elsewhere who have held silent vigils weekly since 1998 to protest the Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza, and East Jerusalem and to mourn the Israeli and Palestinian lives that have been lost. We also stand with Women in Black around the world against war, militarism and violence.

This Tashlich program is the work of Bay Area Women in Black with the additional, deeply appreciated contributions of Jami Sieber, Melanie De More, Liat Weingart, Linda Hirschhorn, Ruth Atkin, Janet Tabacman, Joan Bobkoff, Amir Terkel, Donna Korones, Arina Isaacson, and Sari Broner. Songs written by Charlie King and Holly Near.