

Statement of Solidarity Condemning the National BDS Conference at the University of Pennsylvania

This February, a national conference of BDS supporters (Boycott, Divestment, and Sanctions against Israel) will be held in Philadelphia at the University of Pennsylvania. The conference is being brought to campus by a student group called PennBDS, which is sanctioned and funded by the Student Council at Penn.

This conference will assemble academics and professional activists with the sole purpose of pursuing a delegitimization campaign against Israel. The speakers and panelists are part of a larger global effort to undermine the Jewish people's right to self-determination in their homeland. The BDS campaign is, in fact, contrary to the goal of two states—Jewish and Palestinian—living side-by-side in peace and security.

Leaders from a cross section of local Jewish community organizations expressed our concerns to the University about the conference and the extreme rhetoric of BDS speakers. The President of the University of Pennsylvania is on record clarifying that this is “not an event sponsored by the University” and that the University has “clearly stated on numerous occasions that it does not support sanctions or boycotts against Israel.” Still, we feel that, rather than encourage discourse, the conference is likely to create deep divisions among students and promote an atmosphere of intolerance on campus. We believe that the outrageous claims of BDS campaigns do not stand up to the rigors of academic inquiry and as such, go against the sophisticated civil discourse that is a core element of the mission of the University of Pennsylvania.

We, the undersigned members of the Jewish community, stand united in our condemnation of the corrosive nature of this BDS conference and its calls for boycotts, divestment and sanctions of Israel.

We also stand united in our support of the students' efforts on campus to:

- Transform this challenge into an opportunity to help fellow students grow as leaders and advocates for Israel.
- Educate more students about the realities of the State of Israel and the false claims of the global BDS campaign.
- Expand the on-campus coalition of Israel supporters among both Jews and non-Jews.

Abrams Hebrew Academy
Rabbi Ira Budow, Director

Aish HaTorah Philadelphia
Rabbi Yaacov Couzens

American Jewish Committee
Rabbi Mark Robbins, Director

Anti-Defamation League
Barry Morrison, Regional Director

Board of Rabbis of Greater Philadelphia
Executive Committee

**Friends of Israel Defense Forces,
Pennsylvania and Southern
New Jersey Chapter**
Tzvia Wexler, Director

Gratz College
Joy W. Goldstein, President

Hadassah of Greater Philadelphia
Roz Holberg, President

Hillel of Greater Philadelphia
Rabbi Howard Alpert, Executive Director

Jack M. Barrack Hebrew Academy
Sharon Levin, Interim Head of School

**Jewish Community Relations Council of
Greater Philadelphia**
Adam Kessler, Executive Director

**Jewish Community Relations Council of
Southern New Jersey**
David Snyder, Executive Director

**Jewish Federation of Cumberland,
Gloucester and Salem Counties**
Steven Schimmel, Executive Director

Jewish Federation of Greater Philadelphia
Ira M. Schwartz, Chief Executive Officer

Jewish Federation of Southern New Jersey
Joel M. Kaber, Chief Executive Officer

Kellman Brown Academy, Voorhees, NJ
Rabbi Moshe Schwartz, Head of School

Kohelet Yeshiva High School
Rabbi Elchanan Weinbach, Head of School

**Perelman Jewish Day School,
Wynnewood and Melrose Park**
Jay Leberman, Head of School

Politz Day School, Cherry Hill, NJ
Rabbi Avraham Glustein, Head of School

Republican Jewish Coalition
Scott Feigelstein, Director

Scholars for Peace in the Middle East
Asaf Romirowsky, Acting Executive Director

Torah Academy of Greater Philadelphia
Rabbi Shmuel Jablon, Menahel (Principal)

**Tri-County Board of Rabbis of
Southern New Jersey**
Rabbi Micah Peltz, President

Zionist Organization of America
Steve Feldman, Executive Director

Z STREET
Lori Lowenthal Marcus, President and Founder