

Congresswoman Val Hoyle stated:
“If I could stop the war in Gaza, I would do it. I don’t actually have that power, and we have an administration that literally doesn’t care at all about the Palestinian people.”

Conceding her characterization of Gaza as war, has she forgotten that Congress has the power to stop the “war” by cutting off funding to Israel? Did she forget the Biden administration demonstrating it also literally didn’t care at all about the Pales-

tinian people by funding Israel’s genocide? Genocide is a term Hoyle won’t use. This is puzzling given the evidence and the example of fellow progressive Democrats who have publicly word called out the genocide.

Therein lies the rub. None of these Democrats take pro-Israel lobby money. According to OpenSecrets at TrackAIPAC.com, Hoyle received \$70,551 from the pro-Israel J-Street lobby. At the town hall, Hoyle, questioned about pro-Israel lobby

contributions, claimed she hasn’t received money from AIPAC, avoiding the question (which was not about AIPAC) and was roundly booed.

In an interview with KLCC prior to the town hall, I stated “We are watching a live-streamed genocide. We cannot look away, and so we’re asking Congresswoman Val Hoyle to not look away and to call the action out as what it is: genocide.” During the town hall, the audience interrupted, protesting her refusal to speak the truth.

Our chant: “It’s genocide — say it, Val!”
Pat Driscoll
Eugene

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Local & Vocal

Viewpoint by Ruhi Sophia Motzkin Rubenstein

FOR THOSE SEEKING THE RABBI’S BLESSING

We need to be calling for an end to the killing in Gaza. Here’s how to do so without being antisemitic.

Two weeks ago, a local pastor called to ask if I had concerns about his church hosting Palestinian speaker Sami Awad. The same week, another pastor colleague shared that Gaza was heavy on his heart, but he felt unsure about how to talk about it without being antisemitic.

At this point, I had assumed no one was seeking a rabbi’s blessing before criticizing the war in Gaza. But I realize there may be many who feel caught in this bind. Maybe, in October 2023, you were shaken by Hamas’ attack on Israel, then horrified that it was followed immediately by accusations against Israel of genocide — but lately you are thinking that the Israeli government’s rhetoric and actions; the continued bombing of Palestinian hospitals, press, aid workers and schools; the mass starvation *do* look like genocide.

For those who have been silent and unsure how to speak: It is possible — and necessary — to protest the continuation of this war; to protest the killing of babies and journalists and relief workers in Gaza without reinforcing anti-Jewish tropes or threatening Jewish safety.

It is possible and necessary to listen to Palestinian voices from Gaza and the West Bank. (Indeed, my synagogue hosted Awad the same week as my pastor friend’s church.) It is possible and necessary to protest the use of starvation as a weapon of war, to demand the U.S. stop enabling Israel to keep bombing Gaza. We can do so without abandoning the Israeli hostages or

the families of those slain on Oct. 7, many of whom are also protesting this war.

If you want to protest, as I do, without being antisemitic, I offer these suggestions. If they help anyone else speak out to end this war, then I only regret not sharing them sooner.

1. Don’t conflate all Jews with Israel.

There are a variety of relationships that American Jews might have to Israel, including no relationship at all. High school students who belong to my synagogue have been repeatedly accused of being complicit with Israel’s actions just because they are Jewish, despite not having any more interaction with or influence over Israel than other American high school students.

2. Don’t conflate all Israelis with the actions of the Israeli government. It should be especially easy for liberal Americans living under a Trump administration to understand that a government regime does not reflect the totality of its people.

Yet the casual expressions of disgust I regularly encounter about Israelis suggest an exception. An Israeli here in town has been told in his job search that “no one wants to work with Israelis.” Within Israel, there is a longstanding movement to work for Palestinian justice and a shared society. A quarter of Israelis are not Jewish.

3. Understand conflicting meanings of the word “Zionist” and be curious about them. Zionism has a long history of debate about goals. There isn’t just the expansionist Zionism pushed by Benjamin Netanyahu’s government, which many self-identified American Jewish Zionists do not support. At the same time, Christian Zionism often plays an unrecognized role in U.S. policy — there are more members of Christians United for Israel than there are total Jews in the U.S.

4. Don’t expect American Jews to disavow real emotional, familial and

spiritual ties to Israel. A member of my own community, Adrian Parr Zaretsky, dean of the University of Oregon College of Design, has been relentlessly doxxed for over a year, after visiting family in Israel and doing relief work with Oct. 7 survivors in December of 2023. Activists posted flyers with QR codes linking to her name, picture and office address, with captions like, “Eugene should not be a safe place for Zionism; let’s make it that way.” This has been anonymous, terrifying and antisemitic.

5. Don’t normalize or downplay actual antisemitism or incitement against Jews. Of course it is possible to criticize Israel and to call out institutions providing material aid and advocacy (like the U.S. government!) without being antisemitic. But attacking Jews because of real or perceived emotional ties to Israel, and normalizing or justifying those attacks often entrenches Jews who would otherwise be open-hearted into defensive positions.

6. Think both immediate-term and long-term. Work for a ceasefire and relief for Gaza now. Donate to hunger relief, demand food aid, demand a stop to the bombing. Also: Uplift and support those who are working for long-term justice, for alternatives to the current violently extremist leadership of both peoples, and for coexistence in the land. Neither people is going away.

If you think that there shouldn’t be any nation-states — but that Israel should be the first to stop existing, and actually there should be a Palestinian nation-state — please examine the contradictions and inherent antisemitism in that position.

7. Consider your own positionality and complicity. It’s completely understandable for Palestinians, living under the daily traumas of bombing and starvation inflicted by Israel, not to be interested right now in envisioning a future of coexisting

with Israelis. (Many Israelis, living under constant rocket-fire, and in the aftermath of the Oct. 7 attack, don’t imagine a future coexisting with Palestinians.)

Those of us who are not living under those daily traumas must hold that vision of coexistence on everyone’s behalf. And to work for it, we must start from our own complicity as Americans, and our own failures up to this point.

8. Stop suggesting that Jews should have “learned the lesson” of the Holocaust. The Holocaust was not a college course that we chose. Neither was it a disciplinary measure meant to teach us to “do better.” Jews learn our lessons from the Torah, from millennia of written and oral traditions.

And, of course, we wind up internalizing lessons from history. Sometimes history leads us to the conclusion that we must protect the vulnerable everywhere. Or, sometimes we conclude that no one cares about us and that we need to protect ourselves with actual firepower when we’re threatened. This trauma is being enacted and transmitted right now. We can and must interrupt it, for the sake of Jews and Palestinians.

For a deeper dive into how to advocate for Palestine without being antisemitic, I recommend a resource at Truah.org called “Criticism of Israel and Antisemitism: How to Tell Where One Ends and the Other Begins” by Rabbi Jill Jacobs, executive director of T’ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights.

Please do not let any of these pitfalls deter you. Let us demand an end to the war on Gaza, donate to Gaza hunger relief, push our elected officials to fund aid, not bombs, and fight for the chance for Israelis and Palestinians to co-exist in peace.

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