

Queers Respond to Tel-Aviv Homophobic Violence, Call for BDS against Israel

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If your own suffering does not serve to unite you with the suffering of others, if your own imprisonment does not join you with others in prison, if you in your smallness remain alone, then your pain will have been for naught.

On the evening of August 1st in Tel Aviv, someone entered a youth group meeting at a gay, lesbian, bisexual, and transgender community center and opened fire, killing two people and injuring many more, some critically.

We mourn the loss of those killed and injured, and are outraged by this homophobic violence. As people who are lesbian, gay, bisexual, transgendered, and/or queer (LGBTQ), we empathize with the pain, fear, and rage that friends, loved ones, and communities are experiencing. We are heartened that people all over the world are coming together to mourn these deaths and to stand against the violence and hatred that caused them. May this loss compel us towards greater justice, compassion and humanity!

As people who reject the Zionist premise of safety based on violence and isolation of people from each other, we cannot subscribe to the representation of this crime as an isolated event, separated from the violence that pervades the state of Israel. To sincerely engage with the question of building true safety, we must recognize the systemic aspects of this incident. Israel is marketed as a gay-friendly tourist destination and a beacon of democracy in the Middle East. In fact, LGBTQ people of all ethnicities and religions face discrimination and violence in Israel, just as we do in all other parts of the world.

Furthermore, this horrendous crime took place in the context of a deeply militarized society in which a ban on assault weapons - such as the gun used in this attack - is simply unimaginable. In the territories occupied in 1967, unarmed Palestinians, including teenagers and children, are routinely shot by the Israeli army. Israeli forces routinely destroy people's homes, confiscate their land and resources, discriminate against Palestinians in their access to water, and restricts their everyday movement - much of this now accomplished through the building of an apartheid and annexation wall. These acts of violence against Palestinians are normalized by Israel and its allies. They require a pervasive militarization and a culture of aggression within all spheres of Israeli society. Israel is founded on the denial and purposeful destruction of Palestinian existence and homeland.± Contrary to the mediated attempt to describe Israel as a force of liberation and progress, we see objecting to apartheid Israel as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people, including LGBTQ Palestinians. LGBTQ Palestinians are not going to be "saved" by a so-called gay-friendly Zionist state. Organized LGBTQ Palestinians reject the myth of Israel as an "oasis of tolerance."

We are disturbed by the cynical manipulation of these deaths to bolster support for the Israeli state and its violent policies. When Israeli politicians say that this is an unprecedented level of violence, and promise to create safety for LGBTQ people in Israel, they are using the promise of safety to hide the violence and domination that is foundational to the Israeli state. When Zionist groups emphasize the growing gay nightlife in Tel Aviv, they are using the illusion of safety to draw support and

funding to Israel from liberal queer and Jewish people around the world. We reject these lies, as well as the manipulation of our communities for profit and to increase military and political support for Israel.

Just as we reject the lie that Zionism is premised on the safety of Jews, we reject the lie that Israel prioritizes and values the safety of LGBTQ citizens of Israel. The safety Israel claims to extend to LGBTQ people is false; we do not accept an illusion of safety for some at the expense of self-determination for others. No matter who Zionism claims to save or value, nothing can justify the targeting, suppression and oppression of the Palestinian people.

We call on LGBTQ communities to stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle against Israeli violence. Putting words into action, we call on LGBTQ communities across the world to endorse the Palestinian call for boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it complies with full international law, including an immediate end to the occupation and colonization of Palestine, a dismantling of the wall, an end to war crimes against the people of Gaza, and for the Palestinian Right of Return.

Specifically, we call on these communities to boycott international LGBTQ events held inside of Israel; to abstain from touring Israel as is marketed to LGBTQ people - with the exception of solidarity visits to Palestine; and to counter and boycott the promotion of Israeli LGBTQ tourism, and Israeli cultural and academic events in the countries in which we reside - unless they are in clear and undivided solidarity with Palestine. By these actions, we show a commitment to justice and humanity consistent with our outrage against this hateful and deadly attack that occurred in Tel Aviv.

This statement was drafted by members of the following organizations:

International Jewish Anti-Zionist Network
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and

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