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“**A Call for Unity: Black America and Our Jewish Population During the Israel Conflict”**

At a time when the Black Lives Matter movement shook America, the world witnessed a united outcry against the shameful violence and hatred targeted at a race of people who had a long history of being treated as less than human, and killed in the streets. I must admit, I have mixed feelings about the ongoing conflict between Israel and Palestine, and to be honest, many of us find ourselves baffled and unsure about what to say or do. Many are afraid to share their thoughts and feelings, and there doesn't seem to be enough time to fully comprehend the reasons or evil that has led to the situation unfolding before us.

As we reflect upon these events, we must remember that the NAACP and all of our Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs) were significantly aided by Jewish sympathizers who were not afraid to stand up against injustice and inequality. It is a heartbreakingly complex situation, and while we may not have all the answers, we cannot afford to stay silent. If we remain silent in the face of evil and mayhem anywhere, we become contributors to the tactics used by our common enemies to destroy one another in wars and take innocent lives with misguided information and hate fueled by fear, lies, and evil imaginations.

The answer to this devastation is that this war must end, and it must end now. Both sides are in violation of the suffrage of far too many innocent lives. The deadly attacks by Hamas on Israeli civilians and the devastating Israeli airstrikes and blockade of Gaza have raised accusations among international legal experts that both sides are violating international law. Massacring civilians is a war crime, and there can be no justification for these reprehensible attacks.

The Israeli military has this challenge where you have one of the most densely populated places on Earth where you have a combatant hiding behind and firing from those positions, using the civilians as human shields. This is a horrible challenge. The majority of Israel’s defense establishment has pledged to fight until every trace of militancy is gone from the territory, which is necessary but should that come at the cost even of wreaking mass havoc on the besieged strip’s civilian population.

Israel's relentless airstrikes could come under scrutiny, both because of the heavy civilian death toll and heavy damage to civilian infrastructure. We’re seeing reports of entire neighborhoods, blocks that are reduced to rubble. Certainly that would appear to be, you know, war crimes as well. We’ve seen attacks that have affected hospitals and other areas that are entitled to protection.

In a perfect world, I think that Israel and Palestine would partner in combatting their common enemy and become a two-state nation and celebrate humanity. Only prayer and rational government will accomplish this.

Tonight, I want to address my Jewish friends and neighbors. To those I know, live, and work with, I want to say this: 'I see you, and I support you. In your pain, there are many of us who want to speak out, but often we're left wondering, what can we say? Are we justifying the killing of innocent people? Would we do that for our own families?' My heart tells me that no Jewish person that I know wants to see innocent Palestinian civilians die. No one wants to witness the horrors of war.

It's crucial to recognize that many Jews disagree with the policies of the Israeli government. Many Jews advocate for a two-state solution. Just as there are many of us who strongly oppose some policies of the American government, it doesn't mean that all Americans should bear the consequences of those policies. Was Afghanistan right to create an environment where Al-Qaeda could thrive and carry out the 9/11 attacks? Of course not.

In the same vein, it's vital to remember that not all Palestinians are associated with or support Hamas. Painting an entire population with a broad brush is not only unfair but counterproductive to finding a peaceful resolution to this longstanding conflict. Generalizations and stereotypes hinder the path to understanding and dialogue between communities.

All people, regardless of their background, want to feel safe. Jews are no different. History reminds us that even during the civil rights movement, the mother of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr., a slain civil rights leader, was assassinated in her church during Sunday morning service while playing the organ. Four little girls lost their lives in a church fire during Sunday morning worship in the South. I have no doubt that Jewish people are tired of walking into their temples and being greeted by barricades and undercover police. I am sure they have grown weary of seeing hateful graffiti, just as we were weary of signs saying 'Blacks aren't welcome here.' This is not merely a political issue; it's about basic human decency.

When we see hundreds of innocent lives lost at music festivals or in their own homes, it's a stark reminder that it's time to raise our voices and say, 'Enough is enough.' As Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. once said, 'Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter.' The human voice of reason is the most effective weapon in fighting any war. We all know the consequences when we choose silence.

I recently heard someone say, 'Neutrality helps the oppressor, never the victim. Silence encourages the tormentor, never the tormented.' So, I urge each and every one of us to be a voice for reason, compassion, and unity, to stand together in the face of injustice, and to ensure that history remembers us for the good we did in these trying times.

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