

April 7, 2025

RE: April 5 Hands Off Rally – Reaction to the divisive Anti-Israel speech and chants and a request for change

To: Evergreen Resistance and the Steering Committee of Olympia Indivisible

We attended the Hands Off Rally on Saturday and were so excited to be there. We were overwhelmed and thrilled by the amount of people, by the creativity of the signs, by the energy and positivity. We so appreciated that the emcee welcomed everybody and talked about how we are here to support one another, that we know we are not going to agree on 100% of things, but in general, we can work together to try to get rid of this fascist anti-democratic government.

We had made lots of extra signs that we passed out to people. We took lots of pictures. We had fabulous conversations. Everything was going so perfectly until the last speaker, Cindy Corrie. She did a major diatribe against Israel and in full uncritical support of the Hamas/Palestinian government in Gaza. There were no other speakers about any other foreign government. Russia/Ukraine? Syria? Iran? Sudan? Only Israel/Palestine. No mention of the hostages. Nothing about Hamas and its terrorism and brutality towards the hostages and their own people. Only a cursory mention of the date Oct. 7. After her speech, the emcee had everyone in the audience chant together, “Free Palestine!” This was a stunning and deeply disturbing departure from any other speaker or chant.

We understood this rally was to be focused on the horrendous policies and internal threats to our country’s democracy, constitution, and values. We were shocked when the last speaker was not about any of that while instead taking on an issue for which there is substantial disagreement and deep pain. During Cindy’s speech, [REDACTED] started to have a panic attack as she instantly started feeling unsafe. When Cindy got up to speak [REDACTED] was thinking “This is Cindy. She will also mention Hamas or the horror of Oct. 7. It will not be so one-sided.” [REDACTED] was completely wrong. We have been witnessing and personally experiencing the huge rise of antisemitism here in Thurston County and throughout the nation (and the world) since Oct. 7. Having a final speaker on the topic of the horrors of the “occupation” together with an anti-Israel/anti-Zionist chant that differed from any other speech or chant reeks of antisemitism.

We and so many others who were there for this final speech are now feeling unsafe to attend other marches and rallies. ***We are asking the organizers/sponsors to recognize the divisiveness (and danger to Jews who have experienced centuries of threats to our very existence) of having speakers on this topic or any foreign policy topic for which there is not basic unanimity. We ask that you not have these speakers at Hands Off***

events. We ask that you make sure a list of speakers and their topics be made available before every event so that people can make an informed decision about attending. These minimal protections will go a long way towards making these important public demonstrations a safe place for all and for supporting the mission of a unified and strong alliance to fight for the soul of our nation.

[REDACTED]

P.S. We have been fighting hard for a two-state solution for decades and are active members of J Street, the lobbying voice of progressive and moderate Jewish Americans. (Who are the majority of Jewish Americans.) [REDACTED]

[REDACTED] We have actively worked for more than a dozen years for a peaceful solution between Palestine and Israel. We have been fighting against Netanyahu and his policies and the extreme right wing of Israel because of their focus on settlements and many of them wanting to take over Palestine. This is the same as our fight here against Trump and against the MAGA right.

We are not alone in the concerns expressed in our letter. Below are some of the comments we received in just 12 hours after posting on FB Sunday night regarding our feelings about what happened at the rally.

Our FB post said:

“Here are some of my photos from yesterday in Olympia WA. It was absolutely wonderful, inclusive and positive. All about our democracy and coming together for one another. People were saying there were 7,500 of us.

THEN EVERYTHING SWITCHED. The last speaker’s focus was on Palestine/Gaza with all the blame for what is happening there, going to Israel. No mention of Hamas. No mention of the hostages. No mention that there was a ceasefire until October 7 when it was broken by Hamas in the most heinous way possible. WTF! This rally was supposed to be about democracy, our country, being there for one another. Suddenly, these were not my people. I was not safe. My wife went into a panic attack. We were so shaken, upset and blown away. I will not go to another rally again, unless I know who the speakers are in advance. This was a total betrayal.”

Comments:

- I am so sorry that happened to you there. It is extremely unfortunate and disrespectful on so many levels. The photos you posted are wonderful!
- This is so sad and sickening. I'm so sorry.
- I was reticent about going because of that. We really aren't safe in leftist or queer spaces anymore. Even if fundamentally we are the same except for one HUGE thing.
- I am so sorry you had to endure that when you'd felt so open and supported up until the rally was derailed and hijacked this way— there is no excuse for people not to include our people in their circle of care and empathy - what is so difficult about supporting Israelis as well as Palestinians?! it's not only enraging, its terrifying!
- I worried about that as well as the pro-Palestinian signs. I took pictures of them because I want to document what I'm seeing accurately, but all I could think was, why no mention of Hamas?
- Did anybody “outraged” by the killing in Gaza happen to mention Sudan? Just asking. <https://www.nytimes.com/.../sudan-genocide-numbers.html...>
- I mean, I am not trying to be nasty, but what the hell do u think all these people support? “Our democracy “? Where were they on Oct 8th? Where were they throughout all this insane rise in antisemitism? It's very hard to realize you don't agree with almost everyone around you but there u have it. They were marching for “freedom of speech “. For who? Pro-Hamas activists? Etc. etc.
- I'm so sorry this happened. Such a betrayal
- I wondered about the non-mention of Hamas and releasing the hostages
- Of course there was no mention, I'm sure, of the citizens of Gaza demonstrating in large numbers against Hamas. And the fact that some have been killed by Hamas for speaking out against Hamas.
- [REDACTED] I am so sorry this happened. I was really disappointed when such a beautiful rally took that sharp negative turn. I wish the speakers had focused more on what we can do together rather than such divisiveness. Sending hugs.
- I am so sorry that this happened to you. This was wrong and unacceptable.
- Truly discouraging to hear this, it's yet more evidence to me that the left still has issues with discernment and a comprehensive understanding of the issues. I am

extremely saddened that nothing was said about Sudan, Ukraine, and so many other places where violence and hatred exist including in our own country.

- Her message was so off topic and decisive to this rally's mission that I was furious. She took us into the weeds. Where we were unified, we became instantly polarized. Again, no mention of Hamas or its responsibility for starting this madness. And there was no circling back to the Hands Off message... I left right after she was done. I am so sorry that [REDACTED] was so affected. The day was basically ruined for me too.
- [REDACTED] I was there and I felt the exact same way! I was SO angry and kept saying aloud "This day is NOT about that fight! It's about our fight! And you have no right to assume I agree with you about the other one!" No acknowledgement of the moral and historical complexity, or the horrors of the Hamas attack. It just pissed me off. A perfect example of the kind of group-think on the political left that serves no good. Grrrr!
- [REDACTED] I am so saddened to hear this. I do not understand how anyone can back Hamas. I'm sorry you had this experience.
- Absolutely. It was infuriating and destroyed the sense of unity. My heart breaks for the loss and the lack of accountability that the Corey's feel. I get it. That being said, to foster anti-Semitism at a rally that was meant to be focused on unity, her words were not only divisive, but antithetical to the purpose of the day. The focus was supposed to be Rump/Musk/destruction of the Republic centered. This careening off into the weeds was a distraction.