

Mayor Murray,

I'm writing out of deep concern for your scheduled participation in two upcoming events: the '40 Years of Pride' Conference in Tel Aviv in June, and a Seattle Business & Trade Mission to Israel the same month. I urge you to reconsider your participation in these events for a number of reasons.

First, you should know that Israeli organizations such as A Wider Bridge, the sponsor of '40 Years of Pride,' are participants in a well-documented propaganda strategy, one funded and coordinated through the Israeli State. This strategy--named "pinkwashing"--focuses on a shallow discussion of LGBT rights and lives in Israel as a way to distract from, justify, or cover up Israel's brutal human rights violations in occupied Palestine, Lebanon, international waters, and elsewhere, as well as the real complexities and difficulties faced by queer and trans* Israelis. You can read more about pinkwashing here: <http://www.pinkwatchingisrael.com/> By participating in the '40 Years of Pride' conference you would be giving your support to this propaganda campaign, even if that is not your intention.

Secondly, there is an ongoing and vibrant campaign to boycott Israeli economic and cultural events, similar to the one deployed against apartheid South Africa. You have already shown support for boycotts. Last month, as you announced an executive order banning "work-related and city-funded" travel to Indiana in response to the RFRA, you proclaimed solidarity with queer and trans* Indianans, explaining how you wanted them to "know that Seattle stands with you as you continue your efforts to end discrimination and protect civil rights for everyone." You embraced the tactic of boycott in an attempt to change unjust state policies, and you saw how, at least on one level, the boycott worked--you have since rescinded the boycott because of amendments to the RFRA. The situation in occupied Palestine is very dire. Israel practices overt discrimination against its Arab citizens while it deploys horrendous violence against Palestinians, with near total impunity. Just today, a U.N. probe "has confirmed Israeli forces conducted direct attacks on United Nations facilities in Gaza, killing at least 44 Palestinians sheltering at the sites during last summer's assault. The attacks took place despite repeated notifications with the GPS coordinates of U.N. sites to Israeli forces. In one case, the Israeli Defense Forces fired 88 mortar rounds at a U.N. girls' school where 3,000 refugees were sleeping, killing up to 18 people." This violence cannot be allowed to continue. Seattle must stand with Palestinians, including those who are queer or straight, trans* or cis or genderqueer.

You have a powerful opportunity to show your dedication to real human rights, to real equality of opportunity, to real justice. Please boycott the '40 Years of Pride' conference and please cancel the Seattle Business & Trade Mission to Israel. I would be glad to meet with you in person to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Joe Hiller