

January 30, 2026

Dear Richmond Select Board,

We, Jewish residents of Richmond, Vermont, urge you to reject the Apartheid Free Communities (AFC) petition from the ballot in Richmond. This initiative makes us unsafe.

Richmond is already apartheid free. Racial and ethnic disparities in our community are very real, but they are neither codified in law nor addressed by the AFC. This initiative will not reduce the disproportionate rate at which drivers of color get searched and arrested by Vermont law enforcement versus white drivers.<sup>1</sup> It will not protect Richmond's migrants and legal permanent residents from ICE and Border Patrol raids.

This initiative does not feed anyone in Gaza, or relieve any Palestinian facing indignities at a checkpoint.

What the initiative does do is put a bullseye on the Jewish people due to a false but pervasive narrative of Jewish complicity with the Israeli government. A clear example took place last year when Burlington resident Allie Schachter ran for a position on the City Council. Ms. Schachter, who is Jewish, publicly expressed sympathy for the Palestinian cause during her campaign, and did not state a position regarding the AFC. Nevertheless, she was harassed by another Councilor and by attack ads that held her personally accountable for deaths in Gaza, complete with antisemitic tropes framing her as deceitful and depicting her with laser eyes.<sup>2</sup>

In Burlington AFC resolutions have failed three times. Each time the City Council listened to 2-3 hours of public testimony (with many individuals barred from speaking due to time constraints) and ultimately voted not to advance the measure.<sup>3 4 5</sup> Despite the strong pushback in Vermont's largest city, and the fear expressed by many residents over its language, the Vermont Coalition for Palestinian Liberation (VTCPL) **has not changed a single word of the AFC petition**, and has instead sought to pass it in other Vermont towns and cities.

We are acutely aware that similar rhetoric was spun at City Council meetings in Boulder, Colorado in the leadup to last June's fatal firebomb attack against a peaceful gathering supporting Israeli

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<sup>1</sup> <https://vtdigger.org/2025/05/08/black-and-hispanic-drivers-continue-to-be-stopped-disproportionately-across-vermont-traffic-stops-study-finds/>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.sevendaysvt.com/news/war-in-gaza-becomes-local-issue-in-burlington-council-race-43064725/>

<sup>3</sup> [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bQ\\_KIgaCIA](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=5bQ_KIgaCIA)

<sup>4</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=8KlwfdYJuJI>

<sup>5</sup> <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=6e9rSZhpiww>

hostages, committed by a man shouting “Free Palestine”.<sup>6</sup> We have ourselves become the target of Gaza-related death threats against Vermont synagogues.<sup>7</sup> We respect the free speech right of any person to say that Israel commits apartheid, and indeed we have fought alongside VTCPL demanding justice for Rümeyşa Öztürk and Mohsen Mahdawi. But it is antisemitic to hold Jews responsible for the actions of the state of Israel, and it is antisemitic to deny the right of Jews to exist and flourish in their homeland.<sup>8 9 10</sup> The AFC initiative, unwilling to compromise in the face of criminal threats to our safety, does both of these things.

In solidarity with the Palestinian people as well as the Jewish people, can Richmond build community instead of tearing it apart? One local option is to support Bread for Peace, a monthly fundraiser for two medical relief nonprofits – one in Israel, one in Palestine.<sup>11</sup> There is a Vermont chapter of Friends of Standing Together which promotes peacemaking between adversaries in the Middle East.<sup>12</sup> There is also the Burlington-Bethlehem-Arad Sister Cities exchange program.<sup>13</sup>

These are nuanced, emotional issues that deserve respectful community conversations. Under *Skiff v. South Burlington*, municipalities are not required under state law to place non-binding advisory articles unrelated to municipal business on the ballot.<sup>14</sup> Please don’t let debate over a foreign conflict, and the hatred of labeling one side "pro-apartheid," hijack our Town Meeting.

Sincerely,

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Note: Due to fear of retaliation, some signees have omitted their personal contact information.

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<sup>6</sup> <https://www.nytimes.com/2025/06/03/us/boulder-colorado-attack-city-council.html>

<sup>7</sup> <https://www.wcax.com/2025/08/26/antisemitic-threats-made-against-vermont-synagogues/>

<sup>8</sup> <https://holocaustremembrance.com/resources/working-definition-antisemitism>

<sup>9</sup> <https://nexusproject.us/nexus-resources/the-nexus-document/>

<sup>10</sup> <https://jerusalemdeclaration.org/>

<sup>11</sup> <https://ohavizedek.org/event/bread-for-peace-feb-2026/>

<sup>12</sup> <https://www.standing-together.org/fostgroups>

<sup>13</sup> <https://www.wcax.com/2026/01/06/burlington-bethlehem-arad-sister-city-program-remains-hopeful-despite-ongoing-tensions/>

<sup>14</sup> <https://www.vlct.org/rights-reject-nonbinding-advisory-petitions>