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266 W. 37th St, Suite 803  
New York, NY 10018

Susan F Dickman and Zoya Raynes  
Jewish Communal Fund  
575 Madison Ave #703,  
New York, NY 10022  
Via email: [sue@jcfny.org](mailto:sue@jcfny.org), [zoya.raynes@bankofamerica.com](mailto:zoya.raynes@bankofamerica.com)

Dear Sue and Zoya,

We are writing as rabbis and cantors in New York, and as members of T'ruah. Some of us hold donor-advised funds with the Jewish Communal Fund, as do many members of our communities. Many of us serve organizations that receive donations from JCF DAFs.

We have been disturbed to learn that one recipient of JCF funding is the Central Fund of Israel, which is one of the primary U.S. vehicles for donations to Israeli groups that funnel money to Lehava, the Kahanist organization whose violent march through Jerusalem last month helped to incite war, and whose members organized another hate-filled march through East Jerusalem just this week.

We are asking you to drop CFI from your list of accepted grant recipients, and to publish clear guidelines regarding the values to which JCF adheres when making grant decisions, in order to ensure that funding does not reach other organizations that support violence in Israel, in the United States, or anywhere else.

As has been well documented in [Yediot Achronot](#), [Haaretz](#), the [Washington Post](#), and other publications, CFI funds some of the most violent extremist groups in Israel. These include Honenu, which as Channel 10 news in Israel documented, has given cash grants to Israelis convicted of terrorism. Recipients include Yigal Amir, who assassinated Prime Minister Rabin, as well as Israelis who have carried out terror attacks against Palestinians. Following T'ruah's complaint to the IRS in 2014, Central Fund was forced to temporarily [cease donations to Honenu](#), though these have now resumed.



CFI also funds Hemla, which purports to “save” Jewish women who are “at risk of” forced conversion from intermarrying with Palestinians, but which actually serves as a conduit for funding to Lehava, which does not have its own amutah status in Israel. Bentzi Gopstein, the founder of Lehava, is also a leader of Hemla.

Lehava, which bases itself in the genocidal philosophy of Meir Kahane, is known for violence against both Palestinians and Israeli Jewish progressive activists. Gopstein, a student of Kahane, has been indicted more than 50 times for incitement and violence. Lehava’s power has only grown as the political party to which it is connected, Otzma Yehudit, entered the Knesset in the last elections, more than three decades after Kahane’s own party was barred from running.

This past May, Lehava and its partners organized a violent march through East Jerusalem that included throwing stones at Palestinian homes, chanting “death to Arabs,” and violently assaulting Palestinians and Jews suspected of being Palestinian. More than 100 Palestinians were injured in the course of a single night. This week, these same activists marched again, in an event that injured more than two dozen Palestinians, and in which participants again chanted “death to Arabs” and “their villages will burn.” While Jerusalem police originally denied the permit to march, the parties eventually agreed on a route that avoided some of the most sensitive areas. The heavily guarded event took place after police cleared the streets of Palestinians and closed stores.

Violent marches like these are not new. Every year on Jerusalem Day, Lehava and partners organize the Flag March, which similarly terrorizes Palestinians in East Jerusalem.

The announcement of a new government in Israel has been met with violent language and threats reminiscent of the period before the assassination of Prime Minister Rabin. There is a real danger of violence, and Lehava is one of the most likely organizations to ignite it.

Another CFI grantee is the Od Yosef Chai Yeshiva, which is infamous for incitement and violence against Palestinians. The Israeli military has [confiscated weapons](#) from this yeshiva and even [seized the entire yeshiva](#) after students participated in violent attacks on IDF soldiers evacuating illegal settlements. Leaders of the yeshiva published *Torat*



*haMelech*, which justifies the murder of non-Jews. One of the rabbis who authored this volume was recently [convicted of incitement](#).

Other CFI grantees include the Israel Land Fund, which uses semi-legal or non-legal means to acquire [Palestinian property](#); Mishmeret Yesha, which trains and outfits vigilantes in the West Bank; and [Im Tirtzu](#), which incites against Israeli human rights leaders.

We understand that JCF seeks to designate donations that flow through CFI such that they will not reach these violent actors. However, JCF's 990 lists donations to CFI as "general support." Even if there is a request to designate gifts, there is no mechanism for ensuring that CFI follows these instructions, or any reason to believe that JCF's instructions would change CFI's grant allocations. Donations earmarked for a soup kitchen can easily be used to shift funding to extremist organizations. Furthermore, some groups—like Hemla—that purport to have a legitimate charitable purpose actually fund violence. There are certainly many reputable social service agencies in Israel that JCF donors can support without funneling their money through a foundation that is one of the largest American funders of extremists.

We value robust debate within the Jewish community and appreciate JCF's commitment to fund groups that represent a wide range of political positions. However, incitement and violence are not legitimate political positions. We encourage JCF to follow the lead of the San Francisco Jewish Community Federation and Endowment Fund and to publish clear [values](#) that prohibit grants to groups that engage in or incite violence.

In these turbulent early days of a new Israeli government, the threat of violence is high. While ending grants to the Central Fund of Israel will not shut down Lehava or the other extremist groups, doing so will send a clear message that New York Jews refuse to tolerate violence.

Thank you for your attention to this matter,

