

March 25, 2016

Dear Mr. Fingerhut,

We, the undersigned, represent a coalition of pro-Israel groups who are deeply concerned that Hillel has previously hosted "Breaking the Silence" on several university campuses throughout America, and later this month, will be hosting the organization at Columbia University. As you probably are aware, following a report that aired last week in Israeli Channel 2 news, "Breaking the Silence" is under criminal investigation for leaking classified information.

By hosting "Breaking the Silence" Hillel is violating its very own standards of partnership, which state:

**"Hillel welcomes, partners with, and aids the efforts of organizations, groups and speakers from diverse perspectives *in support of Israel* as a Jewish and democratic state. Hillel will not partner with, *house or host organizations, groups or speakers that as a matter of policy or practice: Deny the right of Israel to exist as a Jewish and democratic state with secure and recognized borders; Delegitimize, demonize or apply a double standard to Israel; Support boycott of, divestment from, or sanctions against the State of Israel; Exhibit a pattern of disruptive behavior towards campus events or guest speakers or foster an atmosphere of incivility.*"**

Unfortunately, one quick look at the "Breaking the Silence" website reveals that "Breaking the Silence" engages in and supports the BDS movement, by delegitimizing, demonizing and applying a double standard to the State of Israel. "Breaking the Silence" seeks to portray a distorted, demonized view of the Israeli Defense Forces, (IDF), with slanted, one-sided and misleading claims of "crimes against humanity" and claims of "ethnic cleansing." Like many similar groups, "Breaking the Silence" presents itself as being simply "against the occupation." However, the imagery and signage that they use presents all of Israel, including the 1949 armistice lines, or pre-1967 lines, as being "occupied territory."

Major General (res.) Eitan Dangot, who has served as IDF Coordinator of Government Activities in the Territories for four and a half years recently said that groups such as "Breaking the Silence" "publish partial testimonies and baseless findings," and in so doing, "are causing harm to the State." Mr. Dangot went on to say that "when the truth is finally revealed - and in many cases, the truthful version turns out to be completely different than that what was initially published - it is no longer interesting and the harm has already been done."

Natan Sharansky, Chairman of the Jewish Agency for Israel and a former refusenik, stated in December about "Breaking the Silence," that it "is not a human rights organization but a BDS organization." Sharansky also wrote in a recent op-ed in *Haaretz*: "Breaking the Silence ... is not a human-rights organization in any meaningful sense of the term ... [It uses] unproven allegations peddled as truths to credulous foreigners in order to override the decisions of a democratic government."

We are not contending that mistakes are never made within the IDF, but when they are, they are fully investigated by the IDF. When necessary, the defendant is fully punished to the extent of the law.

Mr. Fingerhut, the ideas and opinions that are prevalent on college campuses today becomes tomorrow's governmental policies. The Israeli Defense Forces is the backbone of the existence of the State of Israel. By enabling the one-sided view of "Breaking the Silence" to be heard on America's college campuses, Hillel is contributing to an attitude that might well prove to weaken the morale of the IDF and therefore the existence of the State of Israel.

We ask that you therefore not allow "Breaking the Silence" to participate in forums at Hillel Houses across the nation. Providing alternative perspectives is not sufficient; the damage caused by the speakers of "Breaking the Silence" will already have been done. We encourage you to instead partner with the Embassy of Israel and the IDF to provide appropriate forums with credentialed spokesmen.

Sincerely yours,

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