

Israel: The Need for Responsible Dissent in the Peace Process - 1995

Am I my brother's keeper? (Genesis 4:1)

Issue

The assassination of Prime Minister of Israel Yitzhak Rabin has focused the attention of Jewry in Israel and worldwide on the genesis of acts of violence committed by Jews who claim to act in the name of religion.

Background

Jews will not forget the shock and horror of the announcement on Saturday, November 4, 1995, that Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin not only had been assassinated but that the accused assassin is a Jew. This right-wing Jewish extremist, denying the legitimacy of the peace process, had claimed in court that murder was his obligation according to Jewish law. When Women of Reform Judaism, in a 1993 resolution Ethnic Conflict and Violence, condemned "acts of political violence committed in the name of religion" by adherents of religious fundamentalism, its applicability in these circumstances was beyond imagining.

The rhetoric of the intra-Israeli battle over the validity of the peace initiative and the withdrawal from the Gaza Strip and West Bank escalated beyond political discourse to an extremism that included public character assassination of the late Yitzhak Rabin. This rhetoric, unleashed in America as well as Israel, created a climate which encouraged, tolerated and even sanctioned acts of murder and assassination by Jews in the name of religion. Such acts of terrorism and violence, whether committed against any group or individual, constitute a distortion of Jewish law and Jewish values that is abhorrent to mainstream Jewry.

Resolution

The Women of Reform Judaism expresses its horror and outrage at the assassination of Yitzhak Rabin, the Prime Minister of Israel, and urges its affiliates to:

- 1) Remind all Jews that the democratic process is based upon responsible and nonviolent dissent.
- 2) Call for a return to civility in political discourse in Israel, in North America and in other Jewish communities.
- 3) Strongly condemn rhetoric by members of the extremist political and religious right wing that incites against government officials and their supporters.
- 4) Strongly condemn the financial support of extremists in Israel, the sanction of their activities and assistance in supplying them with weapons and para-military training by political and religious extremists outside Israel.
- 5) Urge determination on the part of the Israeli political mainstream to reject the voices and acts of extremists.
- 6) Remain committed to the peace process and fully support the peace policies of the former Rabin government which are now being pursued by Prime Minister Shimon Peres.

We urge Sisterhoods to communicate these positions by holding Sisterhood and congregational programs, asking their rabbis to speak out and by writing letters to government officials of their own countries and Israel and to editors of community publications.

Further, Sisterhood women worldwide pray that the family of the late Yitzhak Rabin, his friends and colleagues and the Israeli people will be granted healing and an end to pain.

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