

Speech for Richmond City Council Meeting February 26, 2024:

Good evening, Council President and council Members.

My name is Yael Levin and I am a member of the Richmond Jewish Community. I am here this evening despite being gravely concerned for my safety and because Richmond Jews are terrified and concerned about their safety. I grew up on the laps of a handful of my Holocaust survivor relatives.

In 2024, in Richmond, Virginia, in the United States of America, Jews should not have to be afraid to wear a Star of David necklace or to wear a Yamaka.

I applaud you for doing what is right by keeping this evening's agenda to Richmond City matters and remaining focused on your duties to your constituents. It is troubling to watch the attempts to distract you from the very important work you were elected to do, at the expense of constituents who may want to speak to their concerns over city functions.

I am grateful for this opportunity.

The word ***Genocide*** is thrown around a lot. Per the United Nations Genocide Convention, ***Genocide is a crime committed with the intent to destroy a national, ethnic, racial, or religious group, in whole or in part.***

If Israel wanted to commit genocide against Gazans, it would have done so already. Instead, Israel warns Gazans to evacuate several days prior to **targeted** strikes by dropping leaflets and even calling and texting. The IDF even checks residential buildings before strikes to ensure there are no civilians left - just 3 weeks ago, the IDF rescued an elderly woman who was bound to a bed by Hamas, a US-designated terror organization, and left there for 4 days with no food or water – she received immediate medical treatment by an IDF doctor. Every loss of innocent civilians is tragic, especially babies, children, and women. But this is **not** a genocide.

This ***non-genocide*** is also reflected in the civilian-combatant killed ratio. Even if you use the inflated Gaza "Health Ministry" numbers, which include terrorists among civilian casualties - instead of a 9:1 ratio like most urban conflicts, it is just 2:1.

This is **not** a genocide. Rather, what we have here, are Hamas apologists, trying to cover for Hamas starting an unprovoked war, one that they promised to repeat again and again until Israel is wiped off the map, and in so doing, they are spreading baseless blood libels about Israel. These blood libels are putting Jews, **right here** in Richmond, in danger.

To those taking up this council's time by asking for a ceasefire overseas – there **was** a ceasefire on October 6. And there **can** be one again – as soon as Hamas fully surrenders and returns the more than 130 **innocent** hostages it still holds – elderly, men, children, babies, and **women** like your friends, wives, or daughters, who are being brutally raped **right now**.

Good night and God bless.

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