

Letter sent by LA Jews for Peace on Dec. 11, 2013 to the Swarthmore College Hillel.

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LA Jews for Peace writes in support of the Swarthmore College Hillel in its decision to uphold free speech on the Swarthmore campus, especially to promote an open debate on issues related to Israel-Palestine, and to declare itself an “open Hillel.” We especially congratulate you in citing Rabbi Hillel in your break with Hillel International Israel guidelines by noting that “Rabbi Hillel valued Jewish debate and difference – it was at the core of his practice. We do the same. For us, that is what the name Hillel symbolizes.”

LA Jews for Peace is a group of Jewish Americans committed to peace in the Middle East through a negotiated settlement to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, an end of the Israeli occupation of Palestinian lands, and opposition to American militarism, imperialism, and exceptionalism.

International Hillel guidelines forbid individual Hillel chapters from hosting groups or speakers that among other things deny Israel’s right to exist or support boycott or divestment from the Jewish state. This rule recently forced Harvard Hillel to cancel an appearance by former Knesset Speaker Avraham Burg because it was co-sponsored by a student group that supports BDS.

The Hillel guideline, contrary to free speech and the open speech environment expected at a university, has been faithfully followed by UCLA Hillel.

Background on the issue is available at these links:

- <http://mondoweiss.net/2013/12/swarthmore-chapter-zionists.html>
- <http://www.jta.org/2013/12/11/news-opinion/united-states/swarthmore-hillel-sparks-larger-battle-over-campus-groups-israel-guidelines>