

Revise or repeal

I am writing to clear up confusion about the [Statement by the Durham City Council on International Police Exchanges](#) that was unanimously passed April 16, and to call for its revision or repeal.

First, the pertinent part of the statement which appears to be causing confusion is as follows:

“The Durham City Council appreciates receipt of the memo dated April 4, 2018 from Chief C.J. Davis to City Manager Tom Bonfield stating that ‘there has been no effort while I have served as Chief of Police to initiate or participate in any exchange to Israel, nor do I have any intention to do so.’ *The Durham City Council endorses this statement by Chief Davis and affirms as policy that the Durham Police Department will not engage in such exchanges* (emphasis added). The council opposes international exchanges with any country in which Durham officers receive military-style training since such exchanges do not support the kind of policing we want here in the City of Durham.”

One must read the statement as it is written and as the council intended. While singling out Israel is offensive for many reasons, it is the italicized sentence that prevents any exchanges with Israel by the Durham police that is most disturbing. While Durham police are prevented from participating in military-style training with any country, they are only prevented from police exchanges with specifically Israel. This singles out Israel from the rest of the world.

When I recently met with Mayor Steve Schewel, he confirmed that my understanding is correct. I asked him if the intent was to prevent police exchanges with only Israel and to prevent military-style training with all foreign countries. While I was hoping the answer would be no, Mayor Schewel said “yes.” Why did the council go further in preventing exchanges by the police with just Israel?

Second, I ask that the Durham City Council remove the specific mention of Israel from their April 16 “Statement by the Durham City Council on International Police Exchanges.” Israel is the only Jewish majority country in the world. Jews are in the minority everywhere else - in North Carolina, in the United States, and throughout the world. The petition and the statement singling out Israel resulted in the mainstream Jewish community feeling attacked and targeted by our local government. It has caused many Jews to feel unwelcome and marginalized in Durham. It is time for corrective action to be taken by removing mention of Israel in the City Council statement.

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