



April 8th, 2025

### **Montgomery County Jewish Collective Testimony on FY26 Operating Budget**

Dear President Stewart, Vice President Jawando, and Montgomery County Councilmembers,

We write this testimony to urge you to eliminate all county contributions to the Maryland-Israel Development Corporation (MIDC) in the FY26 Operating Budget.

The Montgomery County Jewish Collective (MCJC) is a new Jewish communal and advocacy organization committed to collective liberation as the cornerstone of a vibrant, safe, and equitable Jewish community and county for all. We came together in response to the genocide in Gaza, sharing sadness and anger at the failure of our Jewish community institutions and political leaders to recognize the equal value of Palestinian lives; We decry their failure to condemn the atrocities being committed by the Israeli military as it openly pursues the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians from their homes. MCJC grew to meet the demand for an organized local voice representing the large and growing number of Jews who refuse to let their identities be exploited in support of Israel's war crimes and human rights abuses. **As such, we cannot abide our tax dollars to be used to help build the weapons and surveillance systems Israel has used to slaughter and oppress Palestinians through contributions to the MIDC.**

The MIDC provides financial incentives and assistance to Israeli arms manufacturers and military surveillance companies operating in our county, including Israeli state-owned enterprises such as Elta and Rafael. Rafael, whose U.S. headquarters is located in Bethesda, manufactures the "S.P.I.C.E." guidance kits the IDF has used to target apartment buildings in Lebanon, hospitals in Gaza, and shred innocent civilians throughout Lebanon, Palestine, and Syria. **We are outraged that our county has made itself complicit in these war crimes.** Ceasing this funding would also send a clear message to the Netanyahu government not to abandon the Israeli hostages in Gaza and to negotiate a permanent ceasefire.

Budgets are moral documents, and it is no secret that balancing the budget this year poses a more difficult challenge than most. Throughout this process, you have heard constituents beg you to preserve essential funding for education, rental assistance, parks, and public health programs, while others have asked you to make hard choices regarding cutting unnecessary

expenditures. **Under these circumstances, continuing to fund the MIDC would be morally bankrupt and fiscally irresponsible**

In past years, the County has contributed roughly \$45-50,000 to the MIDC (this year, however, the County Executive has decided to fund the MIDC without transparency under the business office rather than as a separate line item). This money would be better spent retaining an irreplaceable FTE providing essential services to residents or providing lifesaving aid to a laid-off worker. **Anything would be a better investment than continuing to fund the killing, maiming, orphaning, and starving of children on the other side of the planet.**

While we can understand any misgivings the Council may have in taking this moral stance due to fears of bad-faith claims of antisemitism, you must understand that **allowing Israel to carry on committing genocide in our name unchecked only fuels more Jew-hatred and makes our communities less safe.** While you may face opposition from institutions that claim to speak for all Jews, the reality is that Jews are not a monolith and that many are far more disturbed by mass graves being dug in Gaza, which echo one of the darkest pages of our history. **You do not have to support Israeli war crimes to support Jews.**

We urge you to choose compassion over complicity by ending our county's support for foreign merchants of death and reinvesting those funds in services that sustain and uplift our community.

Please drop the MIDC from the county budget.

Signed,

Karen Caplan  
Chair, Montgomery County Jewish Collective