

December 24, 1969

A JEWISH STATEMENT OF CONSCIENCE ON VIETNAM.

The tragic history of the Jewish people reminds us of the terrible price which is paid when injustice is met with silence. The world looked on silently during the Holocaust. And even now there is silence as the people of Israel are openly threatened with genocide at the hands of her unremittingly hostile neighbors.

As Jews, therefore, we are opposed to any effort to render silent those who would speak their consciences against injustice at home or abroad. We are deeply concerned when our national leaders raise silence to a national virtue.

The Jewish community is dedicated to the achievement of social and economic justice for our people and to the strengthening of our democratic values. The achievement of these goals will not be possible so long as our national energies and our national resources continue to be sapped by our involvement in a senseless and immoral war in Vietnam.

The war has created national disunity and has set American against American. Because we have not adequately met the crisis of our cities and the problems of the disadvantaged, racial antagonisms have heightened. The resultant divisiveness threatens our democracy.

The grim reports from My Lai which have led President Nixon to affirm that a massacre of innocent civilians had taken place, reminds Jews of the fragility of the barriers against man's capacity for inhumanity to his fellowman. The cruel war in Vietnam, by its very nature, tears at the fundamental values of morality and concern for life which have guided our country and our people. In the light of our experience as Jews, we are deeply concerned.

We, therefore, call upon our Government to speed the end of our country's involvement in the war in Vietnam. We ask that the myths which led our country into this senseless struggle be abandoned and that the continuing sacrifice of American and Vietnamese lives in justification of the failures of the past be ended. We ask for peace in Vietnam at the earliest possible moment.

As Jews we know of the yearning of the people of Israel for the peace so long denied them. That knowledge makes it even more imperative that we ask our Government to bring peace to the people of Vietnam at the earliest possible moment.