



OFFICE OF THE
CITY COUNCIL

CITY OF SACRAMENTO
CALIFORNIA

STEVE COHN

COUNCILMEMBER
DISTRICT THREE

June 11, 2012

Mr. Adeeb Alzanon
Palestinian American Congress
3905 Windrose Place
Antelope, CA 95843

Dear Mr. Alzanon :

Thank you for your letter raising concerns about the proposal to form a Sister City relationship between the City of Sacramento and Ashkelon, Israel. As I am a locally effected official untrained in foreign policy or international affairs, I will not respond point by point to the allegations in your letter, though it appears to me that the letter contains numerous false or misleading statements.

My main point is that the Sister Cities program is designed to allow people-to-people interaction despite our political or religious differences. This point is reinforced by the mission statement quoted on the City's website which reads: "the mission of the Sister Cities Council of Sacramento is to develop mutually beneficial cultural, educational, social, and/or economic relationships between the citizens of Sacramento and its Sister Cities." The Sister Cities program is most certainly not a forum for political debate.

As a long-time supporter of the Sister Cities program, I have participated in many Sister Cities programs and have had the good fortune to visit many times with delegations from all over the world, including Jinan (China), Yongsan-qu (Korea), Matsuyama (Japan), Chisinau (Moldova), San Juan de Oriente (Nicaragua), and Bethelam (Palestinian Authority). Until now, I have never been asked to weigh in on the politics or human rights allegations involving any of these countries, although certainly there have been numerous human rights and other abuses alleged to occur in all of them in the not-too-distant past.

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In fact, I voted to approve Sacramento's Bethlehem Sister City resolution based in large part on promises by its proponents that they would not play politics with this program, nor would they oppose a Sacramento Sister City in Israel. Yet the allegations you raise in your letter would seem to disqualify any city in Israel from becoming Sacramento's sister city.

Neither I nor the Jewish community even considered raising the fact that heinous acts of terrorism and murder against innocent civilians have taken place in Israel, because the precise point of the Sister Cities program is to build connections with people in the hope that we can overcome our differences and foster peace and good will between people of decency around the world.

In conclusion, I hope you will reconsider your strategy of attacking the proposal to form a Sacramento Sister City in Israel. Whether you do or not, I will be happy to meet with you and your group before the item is scheduled for action by the Sacramento City Council, provided that you keep politics out of that meeting.

Yours truly,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Steve Cohn", written in black ink.

STEVE COHN
Councilmember, District 3

Cc: Mayor Kevin Johnson
Councilmember Jay Schenirer
Shirley Concolino
Lisa Serna
Starr Walton Hurley
Melissa Chapman