

Veterans For Peace

Chapter 87

5301 Harte Way

Sacramento, CA 95822



August 9, 2012

Dear Councilmember

I am writing on behalf of the Sacramento chapter of Veterans For Peace to urge you not to accept Ashkelon as a Sister City to Sacramento.

For Sacramento to Sister City with Ashkelon would violate the very principles of the Sister City program. It would also violate a Sacramento City resolution (2009-777), the Constitution of the State of California, and the U. S. Constitution. These violations would result due to Israeli policies of discrimination based on the national origin of U.S. citizens of Palestinian origin.

Sister Cities are supposed to be sponsored by “a volunteer group of ordinary citizens,” yet this is not the case for Ashkelon. It is being sponsored by a professional group with direct ties to the government of Israel. Hardly an independent citizens group.

There are other reasons why the city of Ashkelon is a very poor choice for a Sacramento Sister City, and why Veterans For Peace feels strongly about this matter. The notorious Shikma Prison is in Ashkelon. This prison was sanctioned by Amnesty International for torture practices. And according to an August 1 New York Times article (reprinted in the Sacramento Bee), Ashkelon is the home of an Israeli military base that launches rockets into civilian areas of Gaza.

These questionable aspects of Ashkelon continue the tragic legacy of a city created by the wholesale removal of its previous inhabitants just after the founding of the state of Israel. After the clearing out of the Palestinian residents of the ancient city of Majdal Asqalan, the new Israeli government filled the renamed town of Ashkelon with Israeli soldiers' families and European immigrants. The practice continues today with new immigrants from the former Soviet Union. At the same time, the government of Israel refuses to obey the United Nations and allow the victims of Israel's ethnic cleansing to return to their rightful homes.

I'm sure you can now see why Ashkelon is not a good choice for a Sacramento Sister City. I, once again, urge you not to allow Sacramento to be paired with such a questionable place. Please vote NO if this matter comes before the City Council.

Sincerely,

John C. Reiger
President
Chapter 87
Veterans For Peace

cc: All City Council Members