

March 9, 2009

The Honorable Mark Kirk
US Representative
Washington, DC Office
1030 Longworth HOB
Washington, D.C. 20515

Dear Congressman Kirk:

On January 30, 2009 we wrote to you to express our deep disappointment and shock over your statements at a recent rally in support of Israel's bombardment of Gaza and its civilian population.

Since we did not receive a response from you to our initial letter, we have taken the following action:

- 1) We are listing you on the Discrimination Watch List for ADC-Chicago, and
- 2) We have asked the National Office of the ADC in Washington DC to inform our members not only in the 10th District but throughout Illinois and the country of a) your refusal to address this issue and b) your failure to apologize for using "hate rhetoric."

We explained to you in our letter that your comments were inappropriate regardless of your political views and ideology. Even if you wish to support Israel in Congress and serve the interests of only some of your constituents, you cannot and should not use dehumanizing and racist language to describe the people of Gaza.

Specifically, we are upset with your statement, "To misquote Shakespeare, something is rotten in Gaza and now it's time to take out the trash."

Indicating your displeasure with Hamas is one thing, but justifying the killing of nearly 1,400 people and describing it within this context is truly another. It is unacceptable language in all forms of responsible debate, particularly for someone who serves in public office.

Your comments serve no real purpose except to stoke the fires of hate in our community. Describing Palestinians as "trash" only fuels stereotypes and racism against Palestinians, Arabs and Muslims in our community and country.

We believe that racism and hate rhetoric have no place in our society, and we ask you to acknowledge the inappropriateness of your comments.

We, at ADC, have a noble purpose. We would like to promote greater understanding for the American Arab community and enhance our interactions with other groups.

American Arabs, as I am sure you are aware, are actively engaged in all aspects of American society. Many of us have served in the U.S. Military. We are proud business men and women. We are a community that respects the family, religion and community involvement. And, we stand by one principle to denounce not only racism and discrimination against American Arabs but also against all Americans.

Recently, when several Chicago area synagogues were targeted by vandals, ADC-Chicago was among the first organizations to publicly denounce the vandalism. We stand in support of the Jewish-American community against acts motivated by anti-Semitism.

We hope that you, as a public official, too can demonstrate your support for all members of the community. Instead of fueling divisions between Arabs and Jews, we expect that you would be at the forefront of bringing our two communities together.

We expect you, as a congressman who represents 600,000 Americans in the 10th District, including thousands of American Arab and American Muslims, to do the right thing and to acknowledge when you cross the line. Once you take responsibility for your action, we will remove you from our Discriminatory Watch List.

Sincerely,

Fadi Zanayed, President

Cc: Chicago Tribune - Letter to the Editor