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Teachers union statement on Middle East sparks rift

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A recent statement by the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers (MFT) on the conflict between Israel and Hamas has stirred controversy and raised objections from some Jewish parents in the Minneapolis school district.

The federation, which represents thousands of the district's teachers and support workers, on Nov. 14 posted a resolution on its Facebook

page that condemns American support for Israel, calls on state lawmakers to repeal anti-BDS (Boycott Divest Sanctions movement) legislation and denounces violence against civilians on both sides.

The MFT resolution also calls for an immediate ceasefire to de-escalate the conflict and allow humanitarian aid delivery into Gaza.

While the resolution has received support from some members of the school

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OVER

Mpls. teachers union statement called antisemitic

◀ **TEACHERS** from BI community, others have voiced opposition and are calling on the MFT to take it down immediately.

The Jewish Community Relations Council of Minnesota and the Dakotas (JCRC) says the statement is antisemitic and hostile to Jewish students and teachers in the Minneapolis Public Schools. But the Minnesota chapter of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR) disagrees with JCRC's assessment, saying the resolution supports both Palestinians and Israelis and includes undisputed facts by international human rights groups.

Marcia Howard, the federation's acting president and a longtime member, defended the resolution Monday while noting the labor group's commitment to peace and justice. Howard, a civil rights activist, said the resolution was brought forward by an MFT leader and approved by a vote during a regular teachers' chapter meeting on Oct. 25.

Asked how many of the district's 3,700 teachers attended the meeting and how the vote broke down, Howard said: "The majority of the people who attended the meeting voted yes." The next member meeting is slated for next week.

"We are here for the safety, security and success of our students," Howard said. "Islamophobia and antisemitism is real and it is present. ... This resolution is some of our members' attempt at promoting a means of safety for children around the world."

Ethan Roberts, JCRC's deputy executive director, questioned why the MFT — which



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Marcia Howard, acting president of the Minneapolis Federation of Teachers, seen in August. She defended the resolution Monday while noting the labor group's commitment to peace and justice.

he said "has no expertise whatsoever with the Middle East" — is weighing in on the Israel-Hamas conflict.

"There's nothing they can possibly do or not do that's going to make any difference on what's happening over in Israel and Gaza," Roberts said. "But what they are doing is having a tangible, destructive impact on Jewish teachers, Jewish students, Jewish parents, and others."

But Jaylani Hussein, who leads the local chapter of CAIR, the nation's largest Muslim civil rights group, said it's Islamophobic not to speak about the plight of Palestinians.

"There is not any substance of that [MFT] statement that is factually incorrect, or in any way implies targeting of any-

one, other than clearly declaring what is already factually true," Hussein said.

JCRC sent a letter Monday to interim district Superintendent Rochelle Cox and the Minneapolis school board, demanding that the district publicly distance itself from the "antisemitic and hostile" MFT resolution. It also called for a conversation with school district leaders, administrators and educators about Jewish identity and antisemitism. More than 783 people, including parents, staff, students and residents, have signed the letter.

Minneapolis school district officials did not immediately respond Monday to a request for comment.

JCRC leaders say in the

letter that the MFT refuses to condemn the attack by Hamas and places sole blame on Israel for the conflict, while failing to call for the immediate release of Israeli hostages. They also say the letter endorses the Palestinian-led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions movement directed against Israel.

Both JCRC and CAIR-MN have been documenting an alarming surge of antisemitism and Islamophobia in schools since Hamas attacked Israel on Oct. 7, raising concerns among both Jewish and Muslim families. CAIR said it's investigating reports of students being suspended for speaking up for Palestinian causes.

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Ethan Roberts, JCRC executive director