



Jewish Voice for Peace

Justice • Equality • Dignity

October 8, 2016

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Dear Members of the Alameda County Board of Supervisors

I am writing today on behalf of the Bay Area Chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace to express our membership's deep concern about the controversial Urban Shield training and weapons expo held in Alameda County. We have learned that funding proposals to the Bay Area Urban Areas Security Initiative will be due on October 14. We feel strongly that the Board of Supervisors should *exclude* Urban Shield from any funding proposals for Fiscal Year 2017. Alameda County has an opportunity to seek funding for emergency response resources that prioritize health and wellbeing and not militarized policing. I hope the Board takes this opportunity to defund Urban Shield now.

The Bay Area chapter of Jewish Voice for Peace, one of 60 chapters across the country, represents over 5,000 members and supporters in Alameda County. While our membership is extremely supportive of Alameda County developing, supporting, and increasing its capacity to respond to emergencies, we are not supportive of divisive and dangerous programs such as Urban Shield. We know that Urban Shield is billed as an emergency preparedness activity. However the war games perpetuate racist and xenophobic stereotypes, increase the use of militarized weaponry and tactics in everyday law enforcement, and cost taxpayers millions of dollars. Since 2007, the lion's share of funding that could be supporting emergency preparedness in the Bay Area has been poured into increasing the militarization of local law enforcement. The climate of increased police killings, militarized SWAT raids and sweeps, and surveillance technologies including drones has frayed already tattered community/police relations, destabilized neighborhoods, and broken up families across the Bay Area.

We know the impacts of prioritizing programs like Urban Shield over programs and initiatives that actually support the health and wellbeing of our communities, in times of emergency, or everyday. Urban Shield is failing our communities when it comes to preparing ourselves for the emergencies to which we are particularly vulnerable. The time has come for the Bay Area to shift its orientation toward preparing for emergencies. We insist that the health and wellbeing impacts of such preparation lead our efforts rather than go left unaddressed. UASI funding could be mobilized to support that shift. We would prefer that funds be directed to increasing the availability of mental health workers who could respond to emergencies that are now being handled by police, or to training earthquake response teams that would be ready to help in case of the major earthquake we know is coming.

Alameda County decision makers play an important role in determining the nature, form,

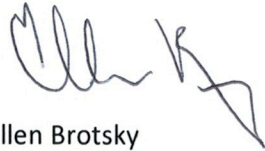
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and implementation of the county's emergency preparedness. Shifting disaster preparedness priorities toward community strength and resilience and away from war games and militarization is an important way to demonstrate a commitment to shoring up preparedness without making the county's communities vulnerable. We ask that the Board of Supervisors to use its power to restrict or approve the resources for which the Sheriff's Department applies and receives, and reject or pull any proposal for UASI funds that include Urban Shield.

Thank you for your attention and action on this important matter. As always, we would be enthusiastic about meeting with you and discussing these issues further.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Ellen Brotsky', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Ellen Brotsky

Member of the Coordinating Committee

Jewish Voice for Peace – Bay Area chapter