

Left-wingers interrupt PM's speech in Louisiana

By GIL SHEFLER
11/08/2010 22:29



Jewish Voices for Peace activists heckle as Netanyahu addresses Jewish Federation in New Orleans; 6 demonstrators removed from hall.

"The loyalty oath de-legitimizes Israel," a woman holding a placard yelled while standing on her chair, interrupting Prime Minister Binyamin Netanyahu's speech at the Jewish Federations of North America's General Assembly in New Orleans on Monday.

She was swiftly escorted out by security. However, moments later, another protester stood on his chair and shouted "the occupation de-legitimizes Israel." The man was also quickly taken outside. But then another, and another, appeared. Six in all. One of them was tackled by participants in the crowd and a short scuffle ensued until security reached him.

The protesters were part of Jewish Voices for Peace, a leftist organization of Jews which helped organize a recent boat that tried to break the Israeli blockade of Gaza and is attempting to pressure the planned Tolerance Museum in Jerusalem to relocate from the current, controversial building site.

"These actions are in part a protest of the Jewish Federations of North America (JFNA) and Jewish Public Affairs Council (JCPA) newly announced \$6 million dollar program to target campus, church, peace and human rights groups that are working to end Israel's human rights violations through nonviolent Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions pressure campaigns," a press release from JVP read. "The Federations and JCPA are calling this initiative the "Israel Action Network."

The group's aim was to draw attention to their cause, and to a large part they succeeded. *Haaretz*, *Yediot Ahronot* and other Israeli newspapers lead with the sensationalist news on their Websites. But the sentiments of the protesters did not reflect any greater discontent by American Jews with Israel based upon interviews with a sampling of participants after the event occurred.

Outside the plenary hall, it appeared cooler heads prevailed. A young group of Hillel students eating kosher sandwiches handed out by JFNA offered their opinions on the fracas which took part shortly before.

"If we allow five butt-heads to hijack the message here by standing on chairs with their homemade signs we're failing our roles as ambassadors to Israel," Daniel Friedman, a student at UCSD said.

His friend, Channah Barkhordari, weighed in with her opinion. "It's not whether I agree with what they have to. There are ways of protesting, and that defeated their message."

Hecklers at the GA are rare but not unprecedented. In 2005 prime minister Ariel Sharon was interrupted at the event by rightist protesters, demonstrating against Israel's pullout from Gaza. However, despite the loud protests Sharon went ahead with his plan.