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**Statement of Leaders of
LGBT Jewish Synagogues & Organizations
in Response to the Attack on the LGBT Youth Center
in Tel Aviv on August 1, 2009**



On behalf of our lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgendered (LGBT) synagogues and Jewish organizations, we wish to express our deep sadness, outrage, and commitment in the wake of the horrible attack on the "Bar No'ar" LGBT youth drop-in center last week in Tel Aviv.

We are first and foremost saddened by this terrible attack on innocent young people, in a place devoted to their safety and security. Our prayers are with the families of Nir Katz z"l, 26, and Liz Trobishi z"l, 16, as well as with the many now recovering from their injuries in Israeli hospitals. This pigu'a -- this terrorist attack -- was against all of us, Jewish and non-Jewish, straight and gay, who cherish the values of diversity, democracy, and pluralism. But we in the LGBT Jewish community feel this pain especially, for we know that it was an attack on us specifically as well, and that it could have been any of our organizations, any of our members, supporters, or loved ones, who were targeted.

We are also outraged. While we do not yet know the identity or motivations behind this attack, we do know that it occurred in the context of months -- indeed, years -- of vitriolic, incendiary rhetoric directed against the LGBT community in Israel. Tragically, some of the harshest words against us were spoken by some of our Jewish spiritual leaders. Whether these words motivated a hate crime, or whether they motivated an act of self-hatred or personal hatred, we know from experience that racist, sexist, or homophobic speech begets racist, sexist, or homophobic violence. We therefore condemn not only the attack itself but also the climate of hatred that some political and religious leaders helped create.

Yet we are also committed: committed to a just society, to dialogue with those with whom we disagree, and to the right of everyone to act in the image of God and love one another. We will not stop or slow our advocacy for full legal equality, in the United States and Israel, for LGBT people. We will not be deterred from building support groups and safe spaces, congregations and community centers, social programs and spiritual havens, of the very type that was attacked last week. And most of all, we will not allow this attack to strip us of our humanity, and our capacity to love. We know that it is love that matters, not the gender or sex of one's beloved, and we know that our tradition teaches us the innate humanity of every person, a Divine quality most visible in our capacity to love.

At this time of mourning, we affirm all of these -- our sadness, our outrage, and our commitment -- and stand with Israel's people and its government as it works to bring the perpetrator of this

crime to justice. The blood of the victims cries out from the Earth, mixes with the salt of our tears, and inspires us to pursue justice, seek the holy, and walk in the pathways of love.

Signed,

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Jay Michaelson, Nehirim: GLBT Jewish Culture & Spirituality
Rabbi Joshua Lesser, Congregation Bet Haverim
Rabbi Lisa Edwards, Congregation Beth Chayim Chadashim, Los Angeles, CA
Congregation Etz Chaim, Wilton Manors, FL
Rabbi Denise L. Eger, Congregation Kol Ami, West Hollywood, CA
Rabbi Lawrence Edwards, Congregation Or Chadash, Chicago, IL
Rabbi Camille Shira Angel, Congregation Shaar Zahav, San Francisco, CA
Joel Kushner, Institute for Judaism and Sexual Orientation, Hebrew Union College Jewish
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Gregg Drinkwater, Jewish Mosaic: The National Center for Sexual and Gender Diversity
Seth Krosner, J*Pride of San Diego, San Diego, CA
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Nicole Nussbaum, Kulanu, Toronto, Ontario
LGBT Alliance of the Jewish Community Federation of the Greater East Bay and the LGBT
Alliance of the Jewish Community Federation of San Francisco, the Peninsula, Marin and
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Rebecca Wax, The Rainbow Center, Atlanta, GA
Rabbi Benay Lappe, SVARA, Chicago, IL
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