Eugene, OR – On Sunday, April 19th, Temple Beth Israel (TBI) hosted a celebration of Yom Ha'atzmaut, or what they call Israel Independence Day, in collaboration with groups including the UO Hillel, the Israel on Campus Coalition, The Jewish Federation, and a Stand With Us campus chapter. The event was a commemoration of the official UN resolution that granted Israel statehood on May 15th, 1948, after settlers forced Palestinians en masse to leave the land. At the time of the resolution in May of 1948, more than 300,000 Palestinians had already been forced to leave their homes by Zionist military forces, and 400,000 more would be violently expelled and forced to flee by 1949. This was the first Nakba, or "great catastrophe" in Arabic.

Sunday's protest began at the corner of 30th and University in South Eugene. A call to action had gone out for people in the community to disrupt the celebration of the Nakba being held at Temple Beth Israel just a block away, and a variety of people assembled. Among those gathered was a group of anti-Zionist Jewish people who marched to the synagogue with a banner reading "No Palestinian Genocide in Our Name." Anti-Zionist Jews oppose the installation of a Jewish ethno-state in the region of Palestine, and reject any right to do so in their name.

Upon arriving outside TBI, protesters stood facing the entrance, and all who came and went from the building walked past them. At the base of the stairs was an armed security guard, and a few police vehicles were positioned around the area. There were also a few de-escalators staged outside, who, according to one, had been asked by TBI to come to the event to "keep kids from getting kicked." One de-escalator for TBI identified themself as a priest from the local Lutheran church. A number of the protesters also identified themselves as trained de-escalators, and assured the attendees multiple times that protesters had no intention of harming any person or entering the building.

After opening with several chants opposing genocide and championing Palestinian lives and resistance, one participant recited the Shehecheyanu, a blessing of gratitude, before giving the first speech. They wore a Jewish prayer shawl, or tallit (tah-LEET), meant to be worn when praying as a reminder of the commitment to the commandments, or (if not a religious Jew) a cultural commitment to one's own guiding principles. They spoke to the crowd gathered, as well as the attendees of the event who lingered outside.

"What happens to those who stand in the way of colonial conquest [in Palestine] will inevitably happen to those who resist [here] in the imperial core. It is for this exact reason that we must continue to confront colonialism and Zionism here, in our homes, in our communities….. We, as Anti-Zionist Jews, mourn those we lost in the Holocaust, and we mourn those lost in the Nakba, and we mourn those lost in Iran, and Rojava, and everywhere that colonialism has infected. We as Anti-Zionist Jews and our comrades, will continue to fight for a world in which we are all free to determine our own futures."

After more speakers and another series of chants, someone recited the Mourners Kaddish (a prayer meant for marking loss or the anniversary of a tragedy) in honor of all those lost during the Nakba, as well as those lost during the Holocaust. Following this, the crowd dispersed. Some of those

attending Yom Ha’atzmaut stopped to engage with those outside, and some reacted with surprise or shock, but the majority of attendees ignored the protesters altogether.

Opposing this “holiday” and celebration of Israel independence is only one part the struggle to confront the Zionist perspective and colonial project. With the support and backing of Britain and the US, the state of Israel has been a genocidal project since its inception. Many Jewish people see their own histories of immense harm being used to justify this violence against others. As one participant says, *“They hijack our fear from generational trauma, and try to turn it into propaganda that says we need to displace and kill indigenous people of the land.”*

Anti-Zionist Jews know well the gravity and risks associated with demonstrating outside a synagogue, and chose to stand with community and comrades in opposition of this event.

“I know antisemitism well, “ said one person. *“I have experienced the fear and effects of it all of my life. But you don’t respond to a genocide with a genocide.”*