

June 13, 2007

To the Editor:

The implicit message of Timothy King's letter of June 11, 2007 is that the State of Israel is not a legitimate sovereign entity, and to buttress his argument, he radically distorts and misrepresents the position of Albert Einstein, one of the most important human beings of the 20th century. While Einstein was sometimes highly critical of Israel and some of its politicians, Einstein was not anti-Zionist. While Einstein was inclined to resist nationalism in general, anti-Semitism and racism (reaching horrific culmination in the Holocaust), persuaded him of the need for a Jewish state. Einstein came to regard Zionism as a nationalism that strove for "dignity and recovery." In a 1947 letter to Indian Prime Minister Nehru seeking support for the Jewish state, Einstein wrote that "long before the emergence of Hitler I made the cause of Zionism mine because through it I saw a means of correcting a flagrant wrong." To Nehru, Einstein wrote "the advent of Hitler underscored with a savage logic all the disastrous implications contained in the abnormal situation in which Jews found themselves. Millions of Jews perished. . . because there was no spot on the globe where they could find sanctuary. . . The Jewish survivors demand the right to dwell amid brothers, on the ancient soil of their fathers." When U.S. President Harry Truman recognized the State of Israel in May of 1948, Einstein called it "the fulfillment of our dreams." In the face of continued aggression against Israel from its Arab neighbors, Einstein set aside his pacifism in the name of practical considerations. "No one respects. . . those who do not fight for their rights", he wrote to a cousin in Uruguay. Einstein allowed the auctioning of this letter to raise funds for the Haganah, Israel's Defense Forces. Always strongly connected to his Jewish identity, Einstein wrote in 1952, upon declining an offer (which "deeply moved" him) to become president of Israel, "my relationship to the Jewish people has become my strongest human bond, ever since I became fully aware of our precarious situation among the nations of the world."

Attempting to claim the words of the dead for any cause, especially those of a mind as complex as Einstein's, can be a dangerous thing. But Mr. King cannot succeed in posthumously recruiting Dr. Einstein to support his transparent anti-Israel rhetoric and agenda. Even if he disagreed with particular politics and policies of his day, Einstein not only shared with his fellow Jews a love and understanding of the need for a Jewish homeland, but was, throughout his life, an active and persistent advocate of the cause of Zionism.

Sincerely,

David R. Warshauer, President  
Asaf Goldstein, Chair- Israel Committee  
Indianapolis Jewish Community  
Relations Council