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# Why We Can No Longer Look the Other Way

WorldPride 2006 to be Held in Jerusalem

BY KERRY LOBEL AND JULIE DORF

**IT MIGHT SEEM RATHER MYOPIC,** even self-centered, to focus on an LGBTQ rights demonstration in Israel during times like these. For now, Jerusalem WorldPride (August 6-12) is still on after much debate. Its organizers are even more determined to sound a message of peace and tolerance in the midst of growing chaos in the region, but they can't do it alone.

As foreigners, it's hard to imagine that business goes on as usual in Jerusalem. We see unending images of complete destruction in Southern Lebanon, and attacks on Northern Israel. Since the Israeli siege in Gaza earlier this summer, many activists, understandably, have found it difficult to call for a focus on LGBTQ issues in the heart of an occupied country at war knowing that Palestinians in Gaza do without water and electricity under the 100-degree summer heat, and that the Israeli army bombs not only Hamas and Hezbollah leaders, but roads, power lines, and innocent families, displacing more than 600,000 people.

However, with international attention now on this part of the globe, WorldPride can and must be seen as part of a wider social justice agenda. Together, we must seize this opportunity to show the interconnectedness of all movements for liberation.

In the two weeks prior to the Hezbollah capture of two Israeli soldiers, WorldPride Jerusalem organizers and LGBTQ leaders from around the world mounted a sustained and necessary response to anti-LGBTQ attacks and death threats by right wing religious leaders, particularly from the ultra-Orthodox Jewish community. These are the same leaders who support the settler movement, and who oppose the creation of a Palestinian state.

Calls by extremists for the world's largest anti-gay demonstration, combined with violence in the region, has led Jerusalem authorities to deny WorldPride organizers the permit needed to march. The connection between anti-LGBTQ and anti-Palestinian attacks has been made for us, and these attacks are escalating on both fronts.

With the escalating violence in Israel, Gaza, the West Bank, and Lebanon, it is time for LGBTQ leaders to help WorldPride organizers make real their pledge to use this critical moment and world stage to show solidarity with Palestinians and Israeli peace and justice activists by calling for an end to the occupation, at the same time as calling for the end to religious intolerance.

Together, we can work for a just resolution to this decades-long conflict.

The WorldPride Jerusalem 2006 website reads: "The reality that surrounds us is one of violent conflict and decades-long occupation. While painful enough, it is becoming even more painful as a result of the separation wall being built up over the last two years, which physically divides Jerusalem and leaves many Jerusalemites behind the wall, denying access to most of Jerusalem for Palestinians, including members from our LGBTQ community.

Our commitment is to challenge the hostile environment around us and stand behind our principles. The separation wall hurts everyone in our community. Within the official program of the Jerusalem WorldPride events this August, we want to express our solidarity with our commu-

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nity's members who will not be able to be part of WorldPride."

As the WorldPride 2006 organizers wrote, "Holding WorldPride in Jerusalem, the city at the heart of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, is a significant opportunity for our diverse community to raise a different voice, a voice for progressive moral values, inclusion, and pluralism."

If WorldPride organizers can speak out against the occupation, our LGBTQ leaders from around the world can do no less. As an LGBTQ movement, we have the responsibility to promote our own deeply held values of human equality and civil rights and to speak out against injustice wherever and however we find it.

For those of us spending WorldPride week at home, we can take action to bring peace to Israel and Palestine, and now Lebanon. Kerry Lobel will be standing with Women in Black in the Bay Area to call for an end to the occupation. For more information about an action near you, contact [www.bayareawomeninblack.org](http://www.bayareawomeninblack.org).

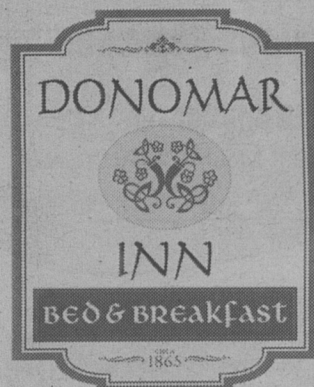
For those who are attending Jerusalem WorldPride, please join Julie Dorf, WorldPride U.S. co-chair, who will stand along with WorldPride organizers in solidarity with Palestinians on Monday, August 7th at a Solidarity Rally at the Jerusalem Separation Wall at 17:00. More information about the rally location can be found at [www.worldpride.net](http://www.worldpride.net).

With our every action, we can bring peace. Rabbi Shimon Ben Gamliel said, "On three things the world stands: on justice, on truth, and on peace." (Zechariah 8:16). ▼

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