



Reply by the Golani Rifle & Pistol Club to Rabbi Elli Fischer

October 6, 2014

(Please note: The following is a reply on behalf of the Golani Rifle & Pistol Club alone, since there was not time in the middle of this holiday season to solicit the approval of the twelve rabbis who signed the initial joint statement.)

Rabbi Elli Fischer attempts to defend the RCA's resolution ([*Gun Violence in America*](#)) by wishing away the text of the resolution and ignoring our critique of it ([*Joint Statement by the Golani Rifle & Pistol Club, Rabbi Steven Pruzansky, Rabbi David Bendory, and Other Rabbis in Support of Jewish Law, Jewish Life, and Jewish Self-Defense*](#)). As a result, Rabbi Fischer succeeds only in further condemning the resolution rather than resurrecting it. While we cannot in this short space catalog all of his errors, we would like to note several salient points.

Let us start with what Rabbi Elli Fischer does *not* say.

1. The rabbi is silent about the allegation that fewer than 10% of the RCA membership voted in favor of the resolution (only 90 out of more than 1,000 rabbis). Does he deny the allegation? If not, does he believe that it was proper to consider the resolution as approved and representative of the entire organization? And does he believe the RCA should continue to issue resolutions with such paltry support?
2. Rabbi Fischer's continued focus on one discussion from the *Mishna* and a single verse from *Isaiah* ignores the vast universe of Jewish Scripture, law, commentary, and history. These two passages alone, especially when considered within their proper context (one discusses the use of weapons as adornments rather than as tools, and the other is an excerpt from a prophetic vision of a future world), cannot and do not represent the Jewish view on weapons and their use in self-defense. Nor are they a sufficient basis for a resolution by a leading rabbinical organization on such a weighty topic.

3. The Golani joint statement provides a more comprehensive range of essential information, especially about Judaism, that the RCA committee clearly failed to consider. Rabbi Fischer dismisses the Golani statement as irrelevant without addressing its many arguments from Jewish texts and history. This is unfortunate but also indicative of the blind approach the RCA has taken in this matter.

Let us turn now to what Rabbi Elli Fischer *does* say.

1. The rabbi writes that only the resolution should be considered, not the accompanying press release (which was emailed on Aug. 13, 2014 with the subject line: “RCA Favors Restricting Easy, Unregulated Access to Weapons and Ammunition”). If the rabbi was concerned about the press release, he should have reviewed and corrected it before it was sent. In any case, the press release only highlights or summarizes portions of the text of the resolution itself.
2. According to Rabbi Fischer, the resolution was “about ‘gun violence’ and not ‘gun control.’” We disagree. Moreover, the text of the resolution disagrees. First, only advocates of gun control talk about “gun violence,” as if guns themselves have agency. To claim that the resolution was about gun violence is to admit that it was also about gun control. Second, the resolution repeatedly promotes gun control, by (a) citing (with links) the recent “shooting deaths in schools and elsewhere in the United States” which the RCA “has noted with anguish and alarm”; (b) joining the OU in its “support for federal legislation to prevent gun violence”; (c) endorsing “restricting American citizens’ easy and unregulated access to weapons and ammunition”; and (d) approving of gun ownership and use only in accordance with “local ordinance,” even though some ordinances, particularly in the New York City area, effectively impose bans on gun ownership and use. Yet the rabbi claims that to understand these portions of the resolution as promoting gun restrictions is “a gross over-read of what the resolution actually says.”
3. The rabbi writes that the resolution is “a critique of elements of American culture that valorize weaponry and violence.” If that were the case, the resolution would not have focused only on the use of guns (no other type of weapon is named in the resolution) but would have addressed many sorts of activities and entertainments.
4. The rabbi claims that “the committee worded the resolution very carefully.” The resolution shows otherwise. Not only is it biased and confused, it is self-contradictory.. On the one hand, it states that the RCA “condones, when permitted by local ordinance, private American citizens’ owning or learning how to use weapons or to engage in violent acts for justified purposes such as self-defense, when undertaken with appropriate gravitas.” (The resolution does not explain why whatever arbitrary restriction imposed by “local ordinance” is consonant with Judaism.) In the very next sentence, however, the resolution states that the RCA “favors restricting Americans’ easy and unregulated access to weapons and ammunition.” The resolution recognizes that laws already restrict the use and ownership of guns, but at the same time states that Americans have “*easy and unregulated* access to weapons and ammunition.” Bizarre.

In sum, Rabbi Elli Fischer's attempted defense fails completely – and in fact inadvertently supports the arguments in the Golani joint statement. The truth is that Judaism does not support glib condemnations of “American gun culture” (whatever is meant by that vague phrase), nor does it support the left's crusade for civilian disarmament. Rather, Judaism regards armed self-defense as praiseworthy – indeed, as helpful to the fulfillment of certain commandments, such as defending the life of one's fellow (Leviticus 19:16). Rabbinical leaders, whether at the RCA, OU, or any other organization, should make this clear in any resolution they issue on the topic, all the moreso now when Jews worldwide are under threat of attack. It is reckless toward Jewish lives, and the lives of all American citizens, to cast aside the teachings of the Torah and the lessons of history, and to pretend that weakening ourselves while increasing the power of the government will make our future more secure.