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FAQ About Tisv #CloseTheCamps Vigils, Aug. 10-11, 2019

What is Tisha B'Av?

Tisha B'Av, the ninth day of the Jewish month of Av, is a day of communal mourning. This year it begins at sundown on Saturday, Aug. 10 and ends at sundown on Sunday, Aug. 11. The saddest day on the Jewish calendar, Tisha B'Av commemorates the destruction of the First and Second Temples of Jerusalem and the generations of forced migration of the ancient Israelite people. The day is traditionally observed by fasting and reading from the Bible's Book of Lamentations.

Why are Jews around the United States holding #CloseTheCamps vigils on Tisha B'Av?

Tisha B'Av is a day of mourning for the plight of our refugee ancestors. On this Jewish day of mourning, we cannot ignore the cries of those whose tragedy is right before us, the many immigrants and asylum seekers who are being treated inhumanely by the Trump administration. We need to demonstrate publicly that the Jewish community will not turn its back on refugees arriving in our country and our immigrant neighbors already here.

Why are many of these vigils being held outside Immigration Customs Enforcement offices and facilities?

The immigrant-led organization United We Dream is asking allies to hold vigils and protests outside ICE offices nationwide. Five Jewish organizations -- T'ruah, Bend the Arc, J Street, the Religious Action Center and the National Council of Jewish Women -- are responding to this request by partnering to coordinate Jewish vigils and protests, demanding an end to this unfolding modern-day catastrophe.

Is this the first year Jews are holding immigrant solidarity vigils on Tisha B'Av?

Last year more than a dozen Jewish communities across the country held similar events. All were sponsored by T'ruah, and many were co-sponsored by other organizations. This year, as thousands of children and other migrants are being put in cages, the Trump administration calls for increased raids on immigrant homes and as the government imposes ever more obstacles for asylum seekers we have even more reasons to protest.

Who are the seven Jewish organizations organizing these vigils?

T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights brings together more than 2,000 North American rabbis and cantors from all streams of Judaism, together with all members of the Jewish community, to act on the Jewish imperative to respect and advance the human rights of all people.

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action is uniting a movement of tens of thousands of progressive Jews across the country who are fighting for justice and equality for all.

National Council of Jewish Women

J Street

The Religious Action Center of Reform Judaism is a hub of Jewish social action work, representing the Reform Jewish Movement in North America.

HIAS

Torah Trumps Hate

What else are these Jewish organizations doing to help immigrants and asylum seekers?

T'ruah has organized a network of more than 70 synagogues around the country committing to support immigrants and asylum seekers, whether through providing sanctuary or other forms of assistance (like accompanying people to ICE check-ins). [More on that here.](#)

Together with HIAS (the Jewish refugee group) we've brought two delegations of rabbis and cantors to the border in the past year to bear witness and to stand in solidarity with immigrants and asylum seekers. (You can learn more about that [here](#) and [here](#).)

T'ruah rabbis & cantors have been participating and in some cases getting arrested in the numerous recent #NeverAgain Jewish actions as well as the Lights of Liberty vigils.

T'ruah, Bend the Arc, NCJW and the RAC formed the Jewish delegation at the protest outside the Homestead Detention Center (in Florida) in June and were part of the successful campaign to shut down Tornillo, the child migrant detention center in Texas.

T'ruah's newly revised and expanded "[Mikdash: A Jewish Guide to the New Sanctuary Movement](#)" provides critical resources, background information and text studies to help rabbis, cantors and their communities take action.

Bend the Arc: Jewish Action has worked in close partnership with Jewish and immigrant-justice allies to mobilize our network to fight back against the Trump Administration's unrelenting assaults on immigrant communities — from a historic act of Jewish civil disobedience in the U.S. Capitol in support of Dreamers in 2017 to our current campaign to mobilize Jewish support for defunding the agencies committing human rights abuses as part of the Defund Hate coalition.

Why do Jews care about this issue?

The Jewish population in America is diverse and complex, including by race, gender, orientation, ability, and immigration status. Whether our families have stories of our ancestors passing the Statue of Liberty to come to the U.S., stories of survival during the Holocaust, or other stories of fleeing or fighting persecution, we all share a central tradition of exodus and liberation. Concentration camps, law enforcement deployed to round up targeted groups, families separated and caged and children dying in state custody all have painful historical resonances.

In addition, our tradition teaches us that all humans are created *b'tselem elohim*, in the image of God, and that we are commanded to welcome the stranger and to care for the vulnerable among us .