

**Date:** May 3, 2017

Yesterday, on Israel's Independence Day, Santa Cruz Hillel and our pro-Israel partners gathered in UCSC's Quarry Plaza to celebrate Israel and her contributions to the Jewish people and the world. We served falafel, played trivia games, danced to Israeli music, and customized shirts with messages of peace. We worked to spread love for Israel to all Jewish and non-Jewish students.

Unfortunately, as interest in our event grew, a protest led by the African/Black Student Alliance filled the Quarry and purposefully blocked our tables from being accessed for over an hour. While the protest centered around ABSA's own demands and not anti-Israel sentiment, our students were, on three separate instances, subjected to protesters yelling, "Free Palestine" and "F\*\*\* Jewish Slugs," and one of our Israeli flags was torn down. The ABSA called for protesters to stand in solidarity with their Palestinian brothers and sisters.

Our students feel disappointed that they were not able to celebrate Israel fully on her birthday but **we will not be deterred**. Our celebrations will continue this week with Israel Shabbat and a Tel Aviv themed beach party. We will also continue to work with our university and community partners to ensure our students are able to express their support for Israel in a safe environment, and that all Jewish students feel welcome and respected on campus. At Santa Cruz Hillel, Israel will always be at the core of our mission.