Sunrise distances itself from, but doesn’t condemn, boycott of Zionist groups

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By Jacob Magid

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The Sunrise national climate organization said Thursday that it was not involved in the decision by one of its local chapters to pull out of a voting rights rally in Washington due to the participation of several Zionist groups.

However, the Sunrise Movement defended Sunrise DC’s “ability to act independently” and refrained from condemning the local chapter’s decision.

The national movement said it “reject[s] all forms of discrimination, including antisemitism and anti-Palestinian racism.”

It went on to note that it has hundreds of local chapters like Sunrise DC, and that each “has the ability to act independently — whether it’s organizing protests, supporting candidates, or sending out public statements.”

“Sunrise DC made a decision to issue this statement, and we weren’t given the chance to look at it before it became public,” the Sunrise Movement continued.

“As a national movement that supports freedom and dignity for all people, we will always welcome anyone who acts on our principles and chooses to join the fight for collective liberation,” the umbrella group continued, indicating that it believed Sunrise DC’s boycott of Zionist groups was rooted in its principles.

“We believe that the rights of Palestinians are a part of that struggle and are committed to embracing that struggle together,” the national group said.

But the decision by Sunrise DC was not welcomed by all Sunrise local chapters.

Sunrise GW, a local university chapter, called the Sunrise DC decision antisemitic.

“Standing in solidarity with the Palestinian people is morally just and not antisemitic. Singling out explicitly Jewish organizations despite non-Jewish organizations in the coalition holding similar stances on Israel is unquestionably antisemitic and has no place in our movement,” Sunrise’s George Washington University chapter tweeted Thursday.

Sunrise DC [drew swift condemnation](https://www.timesofisrael.com/green-activists-quit-dc-rally-over-inclusion-of-jewish-groups-backing-israel/) from Jewish groups and several Democratic lawmakers over its decision on Tuesday to pull out of the voting rights rally over its inclusion of a “number of Zionist organizations,” including National Council of Jewish Women (NCJW), the Reform movement’s Religious Action Center (RAC) and the Jewish Council for Public Affairs.

“Given our commitment to racial justice, self-governance and indigenous sovereignty, we oppose Zionism and any state that enforces its ideology,” Sunrise DC said in a statement it posted Tuesday on Twitter.

All three Jewish groups cited by Sunrise DC have long-established records of pro-Israel advocacy, but have in recent years devoted much of their focus on domestic issues. The three groups all back a two-state solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. NCJW and the Reform movement’s RAC have sister groups in Israel that advocate for the rights of minorities and for women.

Not mentioned in the Sunrise DC statement are two other Jewish groups belonging to the same coalition, Bend the Arc and Workers Circle. Bend the Arc has no position on Israel and Workers Circle backs the two-state solution, but has been highly critical of Israel, and has called on the United States government to condition aid to Israel on its human rights record.

Amid backlash over the decision, Sunrise DC made its Twitter page, from which it announced the boycott, private.