

## 2019 August Recess Toolkit

# Tisha B'Av: Jews Say #CloseTheCamps

### Sample Opening Remarks

Good afternoon!

My name is [name], and I'm the President of the National Council of Jewish Women [Section]. Thank you for coming out on this hot day to demand our government close the camps!

I'm honored to be joined by so many partners in this work, including [list cosponsors], members of local congregations, and all who care about this issue.

Today is Tisha B'Av, a Jewish day of communal mourning. It commemorates the destruction of the first and second temples in Jerusalem, the expulsion of Jews from the Spanish empire, and other calamitous events in our history. Some of you may be fasting, and I appreciate that everyone here observing this holiday has made room in their practice to join us today.

United We Dream, the country's largest immigrant youth-led community, has asked allies to take action to close immigrant detention camps. Jewish groups across the nation have planned events for this holiday. Today, we not only mourn for our historic losses, but for all who suffer under our government's policies that endanger, imprison, and deport immigrants, refugees, and asylum seekers.

As Jews and people of conscience, we are disgusted and disheartened by the administration's treatment of those seeking safety in our country. Jews are commanded by the Torah to welcome the stranger. The National Council of Jewish Women has been doing this work for 125 years, and our work is needed now more than ever.

Immigrants, including families and children, are being held in deplorable conditions at the border and throughout the US. Everyone who visits a detention camp or holding facility tells the same story: people crowded together into rooms and cages designed for populations a quarter of their size. Scarce water and moldy, non-nutritious food. Lack of access to the outdoors, or sometimes, the indoors. The inability to call your family, or contact a lawyer. Confusion because there are not enough border agents speaking the indigenous languages of Northern Triangle countries. Fear about what happens next.

It's even worse for children, many of whom have been ripped apart from their families. Kids in their teens are taking care of babies without diapers or formula. There's little recreation, education, or health care. Experts say the trauma they suffer in detention will have consequences for the rest of their lives. And let's not forget the six children who have died in US custody because their medical needs were ignored until it was too late.

Our nation is in a dark place. A narrow place. A place that feels familiar as we observe Tisha B'Av. It's why we're gathered here today. To witness, to mourn, but also, to take action.

Over the next hour you'll hear from leaders in the community. We'll chant together, and sing together, and pray together. And together, we will demand that Congress and the administration close the camps. There's so much we can do – so much we have to do – to make a difference. But we will do it in solidarity with each other and our immigrant siblings. Thank you.

Next, I'm honored to call up [Speaker 2] to the microphone.