The dastardly massacre on Oct. 7 of more than 200 defenseless concertgoers, part of an organized attack by Hamas terrorists in Israel, ranks among the most shocking situations I’ve seen unfold on the world stage in my lifetime.

Yet rather than galvanizing the support and sympathy one might expect after such heinous behavior, say, in the fashion of the widespread outreach for Ukrainians when Russia invaded, the attacks inside Israel swiftly created sharp divides while triggering a horrifying wave of anti-Semitism that continues to swell.

That the actual actions of terrorists were so quickly justified by so many in this country—and worldwide—troubles me.

Thankfully, we’ve seen little of that in Connecticut. However, I felt the need to speak out about one situation. Less than two days after the terrorist invasion, a high-ranking official for a union representing thousands of state employees felt it necessary to grab a microphone in New Haven and equate the mission and challenges of Gazans to the historic struggles of labor unions, even branding those in Gaza—home of the terrorists—as “comrades.” The labor leader, Kooper Caraway, went on to praise the Castro regime in a rant against capitalism.

To say the least, it was poor timing, and the controversial “comrades” comments, offensive to many, justifiably made him fodder for the Wall Street Journal opinion page.

For my part, I believe his comments were wholly inappropriate for an individual serving as the mouthpiece for thousands of state employees, many of whom I’m certain would find his bombast offensive. What’s more, his tirade against capitalism reflected poorly on a state that desperately needs economic development driven by private sector investment. An individual linked so closely to state government, pushing a radical agenda, is certainly detrimental to the growth Connecticut requires.

Joining some of my capitol colleagues, I called upon Mr. Caraway to be ousted from his role as executive director of the SEIU Connecticut State Council.

Offering no comment to the media, he resigned from his post shortly thereafter. Perhaps our only hint about his feelings on the matter came through his partner, who showed her support for his commentary while also offering the anti-Semitic slogan “from the river to the sea.”

Yes, Mr. Caraway’s departure from prominence here is good for Connecticut.

While I understand the concerns of those currently worried about the well-being of Palestinians as the conflict escalates, I find it difficult to find common ground with those who minimize or refuse to condemn the atrocities committed against the Israelis and are indifferent to the rising wave of anti-Semitism throughout the country. To see Jewish students on a New York City college campus hiding behind a locked door with pro-Palestine protestors pounding on the other side is frightening, as was the sight of hate-filled antagonists clashing with police who warned Jewish citizens about their safety.

Here in Connecticut, we’re fortunate to have avoided such escalation. Still, I found it important to send a message to the Jewish community here by working with other legislative leaders to fly the Israeli flag at half-staff over the capitol recently.

I hope the small gesture carried powerful meaning to those who saw it, that our state is a place that does not condone the hate-filled action and rhetoric we’ve seen elsewhere.

**Rep. Vincent Candelora**

**House Republican Leader**

**86th District**

**North Branford, Durham, East Haven, Guilford**