

January 1st, 2024

Cleveland City Hall
601 Lakeside Ave E #220
Cleveland, OH 44114

To members of Cleveland city council;

The ongoing military occupation and the enduring siege of Gaza stand as defining factors that profoundly shape the daily lives of Palestinians across the world, including in Cleveland. These conditions permeate every aspect of Palestinian existence, casting a long-lasting impact on their daily routines, aspirations, and overall well-being. According to Amnesty International, Israel's continuing oppressive and discriminatory system of governing Palestinians in Israel and the Occupied Palestinian Territories (OPT) constitutes a system of apartheid under international law. Those systems of oppression and discrimination also set the tone for the treatment of Palestinians in the U.S. On October 14th, 2023 six-year-old Wadea Al Fayoume of Chicago was stabbed 26 times by his neighbor for being Palestinian. His mother could not attend his funeral because she was in the hospital recovering from her own stab wounds. On November 25th, three Palestinian college students in Vermont were shot while wearing the Keffiyeh, a symbol of Palestinian connection to land and resistance to occupation. One of those young men, Hisham Awartani, is now paralyzed from the waist down. In Cleveland, we have witnessed the censorship and harassment of our citizens and students as well as local businesses.

Therefore, the people of Cleveland have clearly and repeatedly asked that their council representatives pass a resolution that explicitly calls for a ceasefire, condemns the genocide in Gaza, and condemns rising anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, Islamophobic and antisemitic attacks in our city. The Clevelanders who have made this ask represent the beautiful diversity of our community, recognizing that this is not just an issue that impacts Palestinians, but that impacts all of us.

A draft resolution was shared with city council by Cleveland residents (appended here). This draft resolution is modeled after an already adopted resolution in Akron, Ohio. As the city of Cleveland is home to one of the largest Palestinian populations in the U.S., as well as many other communities displaced by war and violence, residents of our city believe that Cleveland can and should be a leader in empowering these communities by raising relevant and impactful global issues at the local level.

We are not asking for anything that is unprecedented. Many cities have passed similar resolutions including Atlanta, GA; Providence, RI; Detroit, MI; Seattle, WA; Oakland, CA; San Francisco, CA; Wilmington, DE; and Akron, OH. Introducing and passing the resolution that was shared with the council would bring Cleveland that much closer to being among the most forward thinking cities in the U.S. We would be proud to add Cleveland to this growing list of cities decrying the loss of life and the impact of growing Islamophobia and antisemitism in the U.S., including Cleveland.

We are deeply thankful for those council people who have made public ceasefire statements or who have taken the time to talk to us. However, each day we wake up we know that another day without a ceasefire is more lives lost. We know that flimsy promises of 4 days of a ceasefire, or humanitarian pauses, are short-term and myopic bandaids for a much deeper wound. Resolutions such as the ones we have proposed allow Cleveland to not only set the stage for conversations with its residents about moral and just stances but also set an example globally for what standing up for the dignity of all and fighting for the life of all can look like.

We ask you to join us, your constituents, your neighbors, and your community, in standing on the right side of history and putting Cleveland on the map as a city that fully supports all of its residents and takes firm stances against discrimination.

Sincerely,

The Undersigned Organizations and Businesses

Organizational Signatures

Advocates for Peace and Change

American Indian Movement of Ohio

ANSWER Coalition

Arab American Voter Project

Arab Americans of Cleveland - Young Professionals Network

Archwood United Church of Christ

Avanzamos Unidos

Beit Hanina Cultural Center

Black Lives Matter Cleveland Inc.

Black Nationalists of the Republic of New Libya

Calvary Reformed Church

Case Western Students for Justice in Palestine

City of God Cleveland

Cleveland Burlesque LLC / Ohio Burlesque Festival

Cleveland Democratic Socialists of America

Cleveland Peace Action

Cleveland State University's Studnets for Justice in Palestine

Clevelanders for Public Transit

Council on American-Islamic Relations, Ohio

CSU Society of Intersectional Feminists

Cuyahoga County Progressive Caucus

Fifth Christian Church Disciples of Christ

Food Not Bombs Lake Co. & East Side CLE

Greater Cleveland Housing Justice Coalition

InterReligious Task Force on Central America

Jewish Voice for Peace Cleveland

Muslim Association of Cleveland East

My Grow Connect

National Lawyers Guild, Cleveland State University College of Law

New Voices for Reproductive Justice

Northeast Ohio Coalition for the Homeless
Northeast Ohio Worker Center
Oberlin Students for a Free Palestine
OPAWL- Building AAPI Feminist Leadership
Our Revolution Ohio
Palestinian American Heritage Society
Palestinian Existence for Peace Society
Palestinian Youth Movement
Party for Socialism and Liberation, Northeast Ohio

Safer Heights
Salaam Cleveland
Showing Up for Racial Justice Northeast Ohio
Somali Bantu Community Center
SPACES
Starbucks Workers United (CMRJB)
The Rhizome House
USPCN
Young Latino Network
Youth Research for Social Change

Local Area Businesses

Amani's Early Learning Center
Battr Sweets
Bin and Things
Brunswick Grab & Go
Craftyqueen
Dream Creations
Float Life Llc
Hayat Dental Center
Hope Hamling
Knowman Learning Academy
Live Well Counseling
Looks By Nali
Ohio City Subs
Omars Beauty
Omega Fats Action Network
Oxbow Orchard
Rae1 investments

Rana CNP Aesthetics (Sitara)
Resinsbysally
Royal Subs
Seaway Wholesale
Shay's Restaurant
Synaptic
The Blue Palm
The Elkhatab Law Office
The Nut Shop
The Olive Tree
The Root Cafe
Tutti Frutti mix
Twilight Boutique Cle
Westpark Nutrition
Westside shop express
Willow Room Collective
WTJ Counseling Services, LLC



Appendix A

DRAFT PROPOSED RESOLUTION

RESOLUTION NO. _____-2024, expressing sympathy for the innocent civilians victimized by the violence in Israel and Palestine; condemning violence of any kind; affirming Cleveland's status as a welcoming community for those of the Jewish and Islamic religions and any other religion; encouraging residents to offer support and sincere condolences to members of the Jewish and Palestinian communities of Cleveland and all over the world; and declaring an emergency.

WHEREAS, on October 27, 2023, the United Nations General Assembly adopted a major resolution on the Gaza crisis on October 27, 2023. The resolution called for an "immediate, durable and sustained humanitarian truce leading to a cessation of hostilities" and demanded that all parties "immediately and fully comply" with obligations under international humanitarian and human rights laws, "particularly in regard to the protection of civilians and civilian objects." The resolution also urged the protection of humanitarian personnel, persons hors de combat, and humanitarian facilities and assets, and to enable and facilitate humanitarian access for essential supplies and services to reach all civilians in need in the Gaza Strip. The General Assembly also called for the "immediate and unconditional release" of all civilians being illegally held/detained or imprisoned, demanding their safety, well-being and humane treatment in compliance with international law. The resolution was passed with 120 members in favor, 14 against, and 45 abstentions; and

WHEREAS, since October 7, more than 20,000 Palestinians, more than 8,000 of whom are children, have been killed because of this violence, and more than 1.7 million Palestinians have been displaced; and

WHEREAS, the citizens of Cleveland wishes to decry any and all acts of violence both in our own communities and around the globe, and express their deepest condolences to all those affected by this tragedy; and

WHEREAS, the City of Cleveland is committed to encouraging and uplifting both the Palestinian & Jewish communities and their communities at large; and

WHEREAS, there have been many dehumanizing incidents of anti-Palestinian, anti-Muslim, and anti-Jewish violence and rhetoric within Cleveland and the United States; and

WHEREAS, many members of our Cleveland-area community are impacted by the ongoing conflict, including members of our Palestinian community, our Muslim community, our Jewish community, and many others.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the Council of the City of Cleveland:

Section 1. That the City of Cleveland Council hereby expresses sympathy for the civilian victims and all those affected by the horrific violence and war.

Section 2. That the City of Cleveland hereby decries all horrific acts of violence committed against civilians of any kind.

Section 3. That the City of Cleveland hereby affirms Cleveland's status as a welcoming community for those of the Jewish and Islamic faith and any other religion, and people from all walks of life.

Section 4. The City of Cleveland urgently calls for a ceasefire with the release of all civilians being illegally held or imprisoned on both sides of the conflict, along with the establishment of humanitarian aid corridors in order to preserve human life.

Section 5. That the City of Cleveland calls for all Palestinians and Israelis to abide by international law. The Council of the City of Cleveland envisions a political resolution that brings an end to the occupation and illegal settlement activity by Israel and recognizes the legitimate desire for Jewish and Palestinian self-determination, as well as the legitimate desire of all people to live in safety and security.

Section 6. That this resolution is hereby declared to be an emergency measure necessary for the immediate preservation of public peace, health, safety and welfare for the reason that it is immediately necessary for this Council to express its support for victims of the violence in Israel and Palestine, and provided this resolution receives the affirmative vote of two-thirds of the members elected or appointed to Council, it shall take effect and be in force immediately upon its passage and approval by the Mayor; otherwise, it shall take effect and be in force at the earliest time allowed by law.