

National Lawyers Guild at the University of Arizona Resolutely and Unapologetically Supports the Decolonization of Palestine

Human freedom demands the end of colonization, imperialism, white supremacy, capitalism, ableism, and cisheteropatriarchy. The prevailing norms of US culture compel us to be silent, apolitical, and complacent. We refuse to sit passively while genocide is carried out in our name and with our tax dollars. We stand in solidarity with all Palestinians and demand an end to collective punishment, blockade, and the entire colonial occupation. Needless bombings of a captive population and the use of chemical warfare are crimes that break international law and fracture our collective consciousness.

In order to address the ongoing violence, Israel's colonization of Palestine must end. The path towards peace means liberation and decolonization. Palestine—by which we mean all the land between the Mediterranean Sea and the borders of Lebanon, Jordan, Syria, and Egypt—is occupied by a Zionist, settler colonial project that refers to itself as Israel. Our use of the name “Israel” is not meant to lend legitimacy to said project.

Understanding the violence of the present moment depends on when we start the clock. 2023 marks the 75th anniversary of al-Nakba (in Arabic, “the Catastrophe”), when approximately 75% of all Palestinians were violently expelled from their homes and made refugees by Zionist militias. Since then, expansion of Israeli settlements on Palestinian land, theft of Palestinian homes, raids of refugee camps, and the murder of journalists have facilitated the ongoing colonial expansion and apartheid project of the Israeli government. Israeli forces have maintained a blockade of the Gaza strip for 16 years, denying Palestinians access to basic necessities of life. Those who mourn all loss of life in this present moment should direct their outrage at the Israeli occupation for the violence that has occurred in Palestine since the Zionist project began.

Building on 75 years of ethnic cleansing and apartheid, Israel is currently committing acts of genocide in order to eliminate any and all resistance. Israeli Occupation Force leaders have openly indicated their intent to lay siege to Gaza via a total blockade of food, water, medical supplies, fuel, and electricity. The ongoing blockade and bombings are illegal acts of collective punishment.

The first step towards dehumanization is decontextualization. We are guided by history and the legacies of those who have resisted and continue to resist settler-colonial elimination. From Turtle Island to India, from South Africa to Algeria, people of conscience and good will are standing up to declare themselves in support of Palestinian freedom. There will be no physical, mental, or moral freedom until decolonization.

Israeli settler-colonization was and is made possible by support from the United States. The U.S. sends billions of dollars in military aid to Israel every year, but no U.S. foreign policy “interest” is worth disregarding the inherent value of human life. Elected officials on both sides of the political aisle have zero credibility on this matter. They govern us, and attempt to govern the whole world, in a brutal, racist, and extractive manner while preaching about democracy and a “rules-based” international order. But democracy is a practice—and it cannot exist under conditions of occupation and apartheid.

Statements condemning violence that do not simultaneously call for the end of settler colonial occupation are not neutral; by equating the violence of the oppressed and the oppressor, they disregard the internationally recognized right to resistance by occupied people and disregard the ongoing violation of international law constituted by occupation and acts of genocide. There is no acceptable form of neutrality regarding the ethnic cleansing of Palestinians.

Every Palestinian living under occupation has right to resistance. All perpetrators of war crimes and crimes against humanity must face accountability, but this is not possible until settler colonial occupation ends—especially given Israel's failure to ratify the Rome Statute.

Fear is a tactic of colonial domination. We condemn the culture of fear fostered in our institutions and organizations through the conflation of anti-Zionism and anti-semitism, which functions to suppress criticism

of Israeli occupation of Palestine. We condemn the history of violence against Jewish communities while also refusing to accept that history as a justification for establishing an apartheid state.

Specific to our university, we openly and passionately stand behind Students for Justice in Palestine and their efforts in organizing on our campus and around Tucson. We condemn the language utilized by President Robert C. Robbins and the attacks he made by calling our movement, “objectionable or hateful.” We are continuously disappointed by their willingness to stand by discrimination and hate.

As Jewish, Christian, and agnostic people, we reject the use of faith to blur the issue at hand: settler colonial land theft and the ethnic cleansing that accompanies it. The current intra-faith rifts around the matter of occupied Palestine are a product of the settler-colonial dynamic. This dynamic imposes unbearable cognitive dissonance upon all whose faiths are rooted in love, respect, care, and mutuality. To all of our siblings affected by this matter, we are here for you. To all those who are confused, scared, uncertain, heartbroken, anxious, angry, and grief-filled, your emotions are righteous and welcome.

This is not a religious war situated in thousands of years of complex conflict. It is a matter of untenable settler colonial occupation. We are making it plain because our educational, political, and faith institutions have failed to do so. Last month, Gaza could be characterized as an open-air prison. Today, it takes the character of an extermination camp. We say finally and unequivocally, free Palestine—from the river to the sea.

To all who share our values of liberation, ethnic and religious plurality and harmony, fully-actualized democracy, and the end of white supremacy, we say this: join us by demanding that Israel immediately cease its genocidal actions, that U.S. political actors entirely withdraw our country’s military and monetary support for Israel, and that U.S. Palestinian political prisoners—specifically the Holy Land Foundation Five—be freed. Join the movement for boycott, divestment, and sanctions.

Join us on November 9th for a demonstration beginning at the College of Law courtyard at 12:00pm, with a Know Your Rights Training on protesting briefly before at 11:45am. Solidarity.

This NLG Statement is endorsed by:

- NLG at Arizona State University
- Students for Justice in Palestine
- The Latine Law Students Association
- South Asian Law Students Association — Multiple Leadership Members
- Environmental Law Society – 1L Delegate Sean O’Grady
- Justice Advocates Coalition — Leadership Member
- Arizona Journal for Environmental Law and Policy — Leadership Member
- Mylène Laughlin, Andrew Estes, Gabriel Madrid, Maya Braun Yoon, Jackson Bednarczyk, and additional law students from the 2024, 2025, and 2026 graduating classes.