

## **Palestinians and Jews of Portland, Oregon, Call for an Immediate Ceasefire and an End to the Siege and Blockade of Gaza**

For Immediate Release  
October 24, 2023

[PLEASE READ THE ENTIRE TEXT BELOW, INCLUDING THE APPENDED ARTICLE BY ZAHA HASSAN AND DANIEL LEVY. THIS IS THE SHARED SENTIMENT OF THE PALESTINIANS AND JEWS WHO HAVE COME TOGETHER FOR THIS STATEMENT. MORE NAMES WILL BE ADDED IN THE COMING DAYS.]

### **Statement**

We are Palestinians and Jews who have worked together in Portland for many years for an end to the conflict in Palestine-Israel, for an end to the illegal Israeli occupation and for true equality, self-determination and respect for the human, civil and national rights of all peoples of the region.

Today we once again raise our voices, together as Jews and Palestinians of our shared community, to call for an immediate ceasefire and the opening of a humanitarian corridor to allow all necessary material aid into Gaza to address the urgent needs of the people of that region. There must be an end to the inhumane siege and blockade of Gaza.

Together we fully endorse the statement published on October 14th by Zaha Hassan and Daniel Levy, appended below, calling on the entire international community to walk Israel back from the abyss. Most especially our country, the United States, must not continue to support Israel in its current assault on the people of Gaza.

Zaha Hassan and Daniel Levy explain clearly the context and history of the explosion of violence that the world woke to on October 7th. We call on our country to recognize and to finally address the root cause of the conflict which is the 75 years of ongoing dispossession of the Palestinian People. Only then may we finally begin a journey towards a lasting just peace that actively supports the sanctity of all human life in a region that means so much to all of us.

Nael Saker	Nour Al	Julia Lager-Mesulam
Hala Gores	Waffa Hajissa	John Blank
Jenna Noelle	Frank Afranji	David Newman
Mohammed Nabil	Sarah Abuelkhair	Rabbi Benjamin Barnett
Layla Abdel-Jawad	Alexandria Saleem	Steven Goldberg
Nick Khoury	Tag Khuri	William Singer
Mazen Malik	Joel Beinin	Melisa Crosby
Marlene Eid	Miriam Beinin	Betsy Zucker
Layla Kanaan	Randy Splitter	Laura Orgel
Laurence Qamar	Carol Mazer	Johanna Brenner
Wael Elasady	Rabbi Joey Wolf	Harriet Cooke
Kanaan Kanaan	Carol Landsman	Marian Rhys
Ramzy Farouki	Gerson Robboy	Sara Packer

Bill Resnick	Noa Grayevsky	Karen Erde
Adam Segal	David Eisen	Kenneth Lerner
Phil Goldsmith	Maya Rotem	Robin Abrams
Stephen Auerbach	Leah Velez	Sarkissian
Maro Sevastopoulos	Julia Ford	Steve Eisenbach-Budner
Sherry Archer	AnnieRose Shapero	Tamir Eisenbach-Budner
Emma Lugo	Tara Anderson	Karen Mitzner
Jeff Zucker	Lev Eisenbach-Budner	David Lewis
Laurie King	Ned Rosch	
Martin Hart-Landsberg	Maxine Fookson	

**The outside world must walk Israel back from the abyss.  
It cannot be part of the choir of incitement**

A former Israeli adviser and a former Palestinian adviser say individual member states must push harder for an end to the wanton destruction

Daniel Levy  
Zaha Hassan  
Saturday, October 14, 2023

These are painful and dangerous times. Following Hamas's launch on October 7th of an attack on Israel that has resulted in the confirmed killing of 1,300 Israelis so far, Israel on Friday gave 24 hours for half of the Palestinian population of Gaza – 1.1 million people – to move south to make way for what they warned would be the entry of a large ground force, having called up 300,000 reservists. Last Monday, Israel cut food, fuel, water and electricity to Gaza.

Israel's aerial assault on Gaza has pulverised residential neighbourhoods already struggling to recover from previous large-scale bombardments in 2008-2009, 2012, 2014 and 2021.

At time of writing, at least 1,800 Palestinians have been killed, including 440 children. [As of October 23, according to the Gaza Health Authority, 5,791 Palestinians have been killed; an October 22 statement estimated that 40% of the deaths are of children.] Palestinians in Gaza have nowhere to go. Even if they did, trying to move the critically wounded and the hundreds of other patients who have flooded Gaza's main hospitals would turn those centres into morgues, according to the International Committee of the Red Cross. We do not say this lightly: if the international community does not intervene to stop what is coming, we could be watching a combination of mass killing and forced expulsion in real time.

We both unequivocally condemn the targeting of civilians, no matter who they are, as a violation of the laws of war. Full stop. International law defines the conduct of war and the parameters for what constitutes legitimate self-defence. It does not say "anything goes" or that one war crime justifies another. It is also clear that occupied people have the right to resist structural violence associated with military occupation – again, within the confines of legal prohibitions.

We have both spent endless hours, most of our professional careers, warning of the dangers that lie ahead if attention is not paid to the root causes for the untenable situation existing between Palestinians and Israelis. In 2021, we co-authored a report that called on the United States to prioritise rights and the security of individuals and marginalised communities in its policy approach towards Palestine/Israel and to recalibrate US engagement toward international law and normative behaviour, including holding Israel accountable when it is in violation of these norms.

Closing off all diplomatic, political and legal avenues to Palestinians for advancing their rights and for pushing back against Israeli impunity we feared would eventually erupt into violent confrontation that would have devastating consequences for both Palestinians and Israelis. Neither of us is in the mood for “we told you so”.

Before last week, Israelis enjoyed a high degree of normality. For Palestinians, normal has been defined by 56 years of military occupation that has morphed into apartheid. In Gaza, it has also included 16 years of siege and blockade.

We are now staring into an abyss. Surely it is possible, if one accepts the humanity and equality of all people without discrimination or distinction, to hold three truths simultaneously. First, the militant attack on Israeli civilians was unconscionable, inhumane and in violation of international law. Second, Israel’s collective punishment against Palestinian civilians and its actions in Gaza are unconscionable, inhumane and a violation of international law. And, third, one must address the context of occupation and apartheid in which this is unfolding if one is to maintain integrity and be able to plot a strategy going forward in which both Palestinians and Israelis can live in freedom and security. If we can hold these three truths, then it will be possible to prevent further casualties, secure the release of prisoners and step back from the precipice.

The priority now must be to stop the death and destruction in Gaza. Further bombings and a ground invasion will only exacerbate the crisis and increase the likelihood of war expanding to the West Bank (where the Israeli army and settler killings of Palestinians have accelerated), to Israel’s northern border and possibly beyond. Israel has chosen to act in this manner, not Hamas. The bombs falling are Israeli and the decision to cut essential supplies is Israeli.

A humanitarian corridor must be opened between Israel and Egypt for food and supplies to get into Gaza. Trying to force Palestinians out of Gaza into Egypt is not a humanitarian gesture. Egypt is resisting for now but pressure may increase on it and other Arab countries to open borders to displaced Palestinians. As a largely refugee population forced out of what became the state of Israel during the Nakba (or catastrophe) between 1948-1949, Palestinians in Gaza are rightly concerned about never being allowed to return to the strip once evacuated.

Israeli political leaders are openly threatening a second Nakba. The language being used is itself extremely escalatory, even genocidal. What is needed is an outside world that can walk Israel back from the abyss.

Western leaders have spoken thus far with tremendous empathy about the humanity of Israelis. As well they should. However, there has been a glaring absence of any reference to the humanity of Palestinians – it should not be hard to acknowledge Palestinian pain, suffering and endless dispossession. This sin of omission in the language coming from the US and many European leaders is encouraging the committing of war crimes. Western leaders should be on notice and desist from being part of the choir of incitement.

If the EU and its institutions are incapable of stepping up collectively, then leaders in individual member states must push harder for an end to this wanton destruction – perhaps as coalitions of the willing from among the Global North and the Global South.

Zaha Hassan is a human rights lawyer and fellow at the Carnegie Endowment for International Peace. Previously she was the co-ordinator and senior legal adviser to the Palestinian negotiating team during Palestine's bid for UN membership, and a member of the Palestinian delegation to Quartet-sponsored exploratory talks between 2011 and 2012

Daniel Levy is the president of the US/Middle East Project and a former Israeli negotiator with the Palestinians at Taba under Prime Minister Ehud Barak and at Oslo B under Prime Minister Yitzhak Rabin