



Rent Stabilization Board

November 16, 2023

President Biden
Senator Padilla, Senator Butler
and Members of Congress

Dear President Biden, Sen. Padilla, Sen. Butler, and Members of Congress:

This week, we celebrate United Against Hate Week. The ongoing violence and the horrific loss of thousands of innocent Palestinian and Israeli lives is a humanitarian crisis that is impacting Berkeleyans who are grieving and fearful for their loved ones. We can not mark this week and not demand a ceasefire.

I mourn every life lost, I recognize the generational trauma in each painful story I hear, and I hold each life as precious. We must honor our humanity by envisioning a world where everyone can live in peace, dignity, and equal rights. Our humanity demands that our federal government call for an immediate ceasefire to protect human life.

As a Jewish American and daughter and granddaughter of Holocaust survivors, I must speak out. The majority of my father's family was murdered. They also lived a life of trauma. If Americans had spoken out and stopped Hitler's rise to power after Kristallnacht in 1938 instead of waiting until Japan attacked us, if the world had spoken out when Armenians were being murdered, my family would have lived. Bad things happen when good people do nothing. We must speak up. As Americans, we must learn from past genocides and not allow our government to be complicit in the displacement and killing of the Palestinian people.

The humanitarian crisis and loss of thousands of innocent civilian lives in Palestine and Israel is unforgivable and inhumane. The continued loss of children is a failure of humanity. One million children make up half the population of Gaza. In four weeks, over 10,000 Palestinians have been killed, including over 4,100 children, while thousands are trapped beneath rubble, and hospitals are unable to save lives. Continuous humanitarian aid must be allowed into Gaza to ensure basic services, water, electricity, fuel, food, and healthcare.

Families here in Berkeley grieve the loss of loved ones in both Palestine and Israel, fear for the safety of those who have survived, pray for the safe return of family members held hostage, and continue to endure generations of trauma and loss. The U.S. government must do everything in its power to save Palestinian children and families in Gaza, protect journalists and healthcare workers, and support the release of all hostages.

I condemn the ongoing killing of innocent Palestinian lives. I condemn the killing of innocent Israeli lives in the October 7th attack. This violence takes place in the context of the ongoing occupation of Gaza, which is contrary to International Law.

We must commit ourselves to ending the structures and systems that enable the inhumanity and violence we are witnessing in Palestine, Israel, and here at home. We must end White Supremacy, Islamophobia, and antisemitism.

In addition to the pain and suffering our Arab, Muslim, and Jewish communities are enduring here in Berkeley, we are also facing the ongoing crises of homelessness, gun violence, and lack of access to health and mental health services, affordable childcare, quality education, good paying jobs and affordable housing.

It is unconscionable that the federal government would consider giving an additional \$14.3 billion in military aid to the state of Israel. At the same time, our own communities lack access to these basic needs. The U.S. must instead use its power and resources to immediately pursue diplomatic efforts to end the violence against the people of Gaza and the West Bank and to free all the hostages.

The mass protests and the numerous actions taking place all over the globe and the U.S. show that Americans and the rest of the world overwhelmingly support an end to the violence in Gaza and Palestine. A recent poll showed that 66% of voters, which include 80% of Democrats, 57% of Independents, and 56% of Republicans support a ceasefire. Our federal representatives must honor our humanity and every human life by immediately calling for a ceasefire and directing U.S. taxpayer dollars toward a humanitarian, dignified, and peaceful resolution and to urgent needs in our communities.

I thank Rep. Barbara Lee and Reps. Adams, Bowman, Bush, Carson, Casar, Castro, Durbin, Escobar, Frost, Garcia, Jackson, Jayapal, Summer Lee, Mccollum, McGovern, Ocasio-Cortez, Omar, Pressley, Ramirez, Tlaib, Velazquez, Waters, and Watson Coleman who are already supporting a ceasefire, and I urge other federal representatives to follow suit.

Respectfully,

Leah Simon-Weisberg

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Chair, Berkeley Rent Stabilization Board