



UUA Condemns Violence Against Gaza, Urges Immediate and Total Ceasefire

by the UUA Administration

February 14, 2024

<https://www.uua.org/pressroom/press-releases/uua-condemns-violence-urges-ceasefire>

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This statement was developed by the Office of the President and other senior national staff of the Unitarian Universalist Association (UUA), grounded in the values of Unitarian Universalism and in conversation with previous resolutions, statements, and actions passed by General Assembly, the UUA's democratically-elected governing body.

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There are crystallizing moments in the course of history when, in spite of the differences that exist among us, our common reverence for life demands that we speak with moral courage and clarity on the side of love. As people of faith and conviction, Unitarian Universalists share a belief that every human life is sacred, endowed with worth and dignity from the moment of birth, with no person more deserving of freedom and flourishing than any other. Our living tradition has long maintained that the only hells that exist are those that we create for one another, here on earth.

We are watching in real time as the people of Gaza exist in a human-made hell that grows more unimaginable every day. At this point, 28,000 Palestinian civilians have been killed and nearly 70,000 have been injured by Israeli attacks in Gaza since Hamas attacked Israeli citizens on October 7. The medical infrastructure in Gaza has been decimated, and the Israeli government continues to prevent humanitarian aid, including food and water, from reaching refugees. And this week, the Netanyahu administration has announced the forced evacuation and ground invasion of Rafah, where 1.3 million displaced Palestinians have set up a massive tent city as a last refuge. The UUA first joined the call for a ceasefire on October 17, rooted in our historic positions as an organization; nearly four months later, this situation could not be more urgent.

In their January 26 emergency interim ruling, the International Court of Justice found that these atrocities in Gaza plausibly constitute genocidal acts and issued an immediate order to the Israeli government to “take all measures within its power to prevent the commission of all acts within the scope of Article II,” the United Nation’s Convention on genocide (PDF, 4 pages). While the UUA has historically affirmed the importance of the Genocide Conventions, we know there is a wide range of opinion among Unitarian Universalists about how this terminology is used today. What should be clear to all of us, however, is that the Israeli government’s forced displacement, punishment, and intentional inflicting of suffering and death upon children and civilians in Gaza is a moral catastrophe that our faith demands we condemn and resist.

In that spirit, the Unitarian Universalist Association reiterates our condemnation of the Israeli military's ongoing violence against Gaza and joins again with the growing chorus of voices across the globe urging immediate and total ceasefire, the provision of massive emergency humanitarian aid, and the safe return of all hostages and prisoners.

As longtime proponents of the crucial work of the United Nations and its official agencies (see resolutions from 1965, 1969, 1972, 1981 and 2010), the UUA is grateful for the nuance and thoroughness of the UN International Court of Justice's January 26 findings. We decry the Israeli leadership's ongoing rejection of all ceasefire proposals and outright flouting of the ICJ's findings and directives in its ongoing military assault.

The UUA further condemns the US government's unabated complicity in the crisis in Gaza, from providing massive military aid to Israel to slashing funding to the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) for Palestinian Refugees. Without international pressure, the Netanyahu administration will undoubtedly follow through on their vow to achieve "total victory" by decimating the entirety of Gaza. We call for the US government to stop funding Israel's military machine, and to leverage its unrivaled influence upon Israel and in the world community to intervene and stop the attacks on Gaza.

Each day the assault on Gaza continues brings us closer to the brink of calamitous international war. Tensions continue to escalate among nations, and violence has already transgressed national borders and international waters. As a faith community that has historically advocated for peaceful

resolution of conflict and protection of international law, we believe it is imperative that the global community respond decisively to mitigate ongoing harm and prevent further catastrophic loss of life. This terrifying moment calls all people of faith and conscience to do everything in our power to push our governments to interrupt genocide, address humanitarian crisis, avert multinational war, and weave just and lasting peace across the globe.

In that spirit, we offer our prayers to all those working to mitigate harm and stop the atrocities, from journalists and doctors and humanitarian workers on the ground, to Israeli citizens and Jews across the diaspora faithfully engaging and courageously protesting the right-wing Netanyahu regime, to global multi-faith and secular movements advocating for ceasefire. We urge Unitarian Universalists to listen deeply, especially to the voices of Palestinians whose lives and communities have been the vast majority of casualties of this war, and to think critically about the ways the United States is complicit in enabling this disaster to continue.

Like many, we dream of an enduring peace in the Middle East. Israelis and Palestinians deserve real and lasting safety, as do all people in the Holy Land. Long-term diplomatic solutions that honor international human rights and religious freedom are essential. However, in this critical moment we must pressure our leaders to turn back from this precipice of unspeakable violence, or this dream will not have a future.

We call upon all Unitarian Universalists to open our hearts and be present to the depths of human suffering in this moment – not just by one group,

but by people of many nationalities, identities, and religions. We commit to identifying and mitigating the evils of anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, and Islamophobia in our own tradition and to address their toxic legacies wherever we encounter them. Our faith rejects all forms of nationalism and supremacy, and insists that we struggle for multiracial, multi-religious democracy in our own nation and across the world. We encourage all Unitarian Universalists to take action in solidarity not only with global movements for ceasefire, but with liberatory pro-democratic movements of all kinds that are working toward a future that contains the conditions of possibility for a true and enduring peace.

