

January 5, 2024

Dear Honorable Members of the Cleveland City Council,

In 2005, Israel voluntarily exited from Gaza in a committed effort to create a peaceful existence for both the people of Israel and its Palestinian neighbors. Since then, Israel has been under constant threat from Hamas, an internationally recognized terrorist organization that established itself in 2007 as the area's governing power. Hamas has been clear in charter and consistent in message – Hamas is driven by a hatred of Jews and the goal to annihilate Jews and the state of Israel.

Over the years, when Israel has responded to attacks on its citizens by Hamas, the terrorist organization has strategically positioned itself as the victim of Israeli aggression and sought international pressure to condemn Israel and force a “ceasefire” agreement (NOTE: Hamas has never honored a previous ceasefire agreement with Israel). And, each time, Hamas aggression towards Israel sparks a notable rise in antisemitism around the world.

October 7, 2023 was different. Hamas launched a war against Israel – and ignited a level of hatred towards the Jewish people everywhere not seen since the Holocaust. In that one day everything changed.

That Sabbath morning, as people in Israel were preparing for a peaceful day of prayer and reflection, more than 2,500 Hamas terrorists invaded Israel in a coordinated and vicious attack that left more than 1,200 murdered and more than 240 others kidnapped. Among the killed and kidnapped were citizens from various nations, including the United States.

In its barbaric rampage, Hamas murdered whole families in their homes, killing parents in front of their children¹, cutting a pregnant woman's stomach open to remove her fetus before killing the mother² and other acts of indiscriminate hate, violence, and terror. There are numerous accounts of sexual violence that Hamas perpetrated against Israeli civilians including women whose hands were tied behind their backs before being raped and a woman who had her breasts cut off while being raped before being killed.³ Hamas committed unthinkable acts of butchery without shame or remorse. In fact, the terrorists acted with euphoria and pride, even videotaping the acts. It has boasted that given the opportunity, it will repeat October 7 again and again.⁴

Daniel N. Zelman
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¹ <https://abc7chicago.com/hamas-attack-israeli-survivors-rotem-mathias-gaza-israel-conflict/13898187/>

² <https://www.france24.com/en/live-news/20231012-the-horror-israeli-collecting-corpses-near-gaza>

³ <https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/28/world/middleeast/oct-7-attacks-hamas-israel-sexual-violence.html>

⁴ <https://www.jpost.com/arab-israeli-conflict/article-771199>

At the writing of this letter, 136 of the more than 240 innocent people Hamas kidnapped on October 7 remain abducted – including a one-year old baby (whose birthday was this week) and his four-year old brother, as well as numerous American citizens.⁵

There is every indication that Hamas does not want a ceasefire – it wants time to regroup and re-arm itself in the war it launched on October 7. How else would you explain that it has rejected multiple ceasefire offers that Israel has agreed to over the past few weeks?

Hamas does not want peace for the Palestinian people. If it did, would it re-purpose hospitals meant to provide healthcare and save lives as terrorist enclaves with munition storage?^{6/7} Would it continue to use human shields and block civilians from leaving areas of battle in order to find safety in the humanitarian zones set up by the United States and Israel?⁸ The way to move forward and create a better future for the Palestinian people is to prevent Hamas from continuing its oppressive, corrupt ruling of Gaza.

In fact, in the 85 days since Hamas began its war with Israel, Israel has allowed 6,535 trucks, 12,500 tons of shelter equipment, 16,000 tons of water, 62,000 tons of food, 10,000 tons of medical supplies, 203 fuel tankers into Gaza and saved over 350,000 civilians through secured evacuations. This is hardly the behavior of a nation committing genocide. Unfortunately, Hamas steals aid for itself and only allows its rare surpluses to reach Palestinian civilians.

There is nothing that the Jewish community wants more than peace. Israel is taking extraordinary actions to minimize civilian deaths. Our hearts go out to those who have lost loved ones in Gaza, and we mourn the loss of all innocent lives.

⁵ <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67053011>

⁶ <https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/eu-condemns-hamas-using-hospitals-human-shields-urges-israeli-restraint-2023-11-12/>

⁷ <https://www.axios.com/2023/11/14/us-intelligence-hamas-hospitals-military-israel-john-kirby>

⁸ <https://abcnews.go.com/International/trapped-gaza-2-weeks-hundreds-american-citizens-leave/story?id=104223171>

We support a ceasefire that removes Hamas from power and returns all of the remaining 136 hostages to their homes. A ceasefire that does not meet these two requirements only serves Hamas and not the innocent people of Gaza who are suffering at the hands of Hamas and because of Hamas' attack.

On December 20, Hamas rejected a ceasefire.⁹ On December 25, Hamas rejected a ceasefire.¹⁰ Hamas has had the ability to end this war and it has rejected ceasefires and instead continued to launch rockets at Israeli cities and keep innocent people captive in Gaza. A ceasefire will enable Hamas to get stronger and repeat the atrocities of October 7, as it has pledged to do. Providing Hamas this win will not bring about peace but will instead guarantee more suffering in both Israel and Gaza.

Those who are calling for a ceasefire before Hamas is removed from power and the hostages are freed are strengthening a terrorist group and falsely painting Israel as the aggressor in this war that was forced upon them. That false narrative is further fueling an increase in anti-Jewish and anti-Israel rhetoric that is having a devastating effect on Jewish students on campuses and Jews in Cleveland and throughout the world.

The president of the United States, the United States Congress, leaders of the European Union, Germany, and the United Kingdom all oppose a ceasefire at this point and time, and support Israel's right to defend its citizens from terrorism.¹¹

The United States has voted against a United Nations General Assembly resolution and vetoed a United Nations Security Council resolution calling for ceasefire.¹² We would encourage the City Council not to diverge from our national foreign policy.

We strongly urge the Cleveland City Council to oppose any attempt to bring forth a ceasefire resolution – and/or vote against such a resolution – until the Israelis and Palestinians have agreed on a fair and equitable solution for the people of Gaza and Israel.

Sincerely,



Daniel N. Zelman
Board Chair



Erika B. Rudin-Luria
President

⁹<https://www.wsj.com/world/middle-east/israel-offers-one-week-cease-fire-in-exchange-for-more-hostages-336ae59a>

¹⁰<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/hamas-islamic-jihad-reject-giving-up-power-return-permanent-ceasefire-egyptian-2023-12-25/>

¹¹<https://www.ft.com/content/90c13600-c725-4bb3-a6cc-a0f9ed2859bb>

¹²<https://www.reuters.com/world/middle-east/un-vote-delayed-demand-gaza-humanitarian-ceasefire-2023-12-08/>