

February 24, 2024

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2-24-24
(public discussion)

Mayor, Vice Mayor, Members of City Council,

My name is Jonathan Krall. I am here to ask you to pass a resolution that clearly and simply calls for a ceasefire in Gaza. This seems like a simple request, but it runs headlong into the conventional political wisdom that the "correct" policy is unwavering support for Israel. My statement is a request that you each reconsider that conventional wisdom.

We (I myself, Grassroots Alexandria, other organizations) ask for this resolution as part of a national effort to join other communities across the USA that have passed similar resolutions. We ask that Alexandria set an example by being the first community in Virginia to pass a ceasefire resolution.

In many conflicts, including in Gaza, there is an imbalance in power. In many conflicts, including in Gaza, we are faced with moral questions. In such cases, we can seek guidance by asking a factual question: Who has excess power and how is that excess power being used? Is that power being used in a moral way? Is it setting an example for the world to follow?

Alexandria is a community with strong personal ties to Washington, DC. Washington, DC has the power of a worldwide network of military bases and allied states. And so I ask you. Are we using our excess power in a moral way? Are we setting an example for the world to follow?

Thank you for your time and attention.

Sincerely,

Jonathan Krall

My name is Amy Horowitz, a member of the Virginia Coalition for Human Rights and Senior Fellow in Israel Studies at Indiana University. I am also former Acting Director of Smithsonian Folkways Recordings and former Artist Representative for Sweet Honey In The Rock. Today I speak to you as a heartbroken Jewish Elder and Alexandria resident. The Talmud teaches: “Whoever saves a single life is considered by scripture to have saved the whole world.” (Sanhedrin 37a). Every child, killed, injured, and traumatized is our whole world, our own child. My Jewish moral compass points in one direction - that we in Alexandria call for an immediate permanent ceasefire. For those of us who have lost family and friends the corner of King Street and the corner of Salah al-din street in Rafah are the same corner. Dr. Martin Luther King challenged us to become global citizens that speak with one voice to say no to our tax dollars providing weapons of war and yes to permanent ceasefire and sustainable peace with justice and safety for Palestinian and Israeli communities in Alexandria and in the Middle East. Here’s my ask: raise your voice for a permanent ceasefire now -as if your life depended on it.

I was born shortly after my family was dragged from Ryglitz, Poland and murdered in a Nazi death camp. Israel’s disproportional response to the massacre of its citizens on October 7th does not keep me safe. My speaking for a ceasefire and challenging Israeli policies is based on the moral teachings of my Jewish faith. I am not anti-Semitic.

I started life in Anacostia. In high school, I traveled to Israel as International President of one of the largest Jewish Youth groups, B’nai B’rith Girls. I shook hands with Prime Minister Golda Meir and Foreign Minister Abba Eban. On the way to the Dead Sea, I noticed barbed-wire fences surrounding bullet-ridden shacks, and I asked what they were. My hosts informed me that these were refugee camps. I was 17 years old and angry;

how could Israel allow Holocaust refugees to live like this? No, they told me, these are “Arab” refugees. “Where are the refugees from?” I asked. I learned that the refugees were not from distant lands - but from the land that I had been told was empty. I understood then that the land was not empty. it had been emptied. Since then, I have worked with Israelis and Palestinians to bring an end to the Israeli occupation and the beginning of mutual safety and justice.

As a Smithsonian curator, I mentored a Gazan student, Aser Saqqa. Asser helped produce the first festival in Gaza after the Intifada. I stayed with his family in their 16th century, now demolished home. That year, I heard Prime Minister Itzhak Rabin singing *Shir l’shalom* (song of peace) as he called for an end to Israel’s occupation, minutes before he was murdered. I was pregnant. Ten years later, my daughter attended Jerusalem’s bilingual Hebrew/Arabic *Hand in Hand* school. I’ve stood in Jerusalem with *Women in Black* to call for a just sharing of this rocky soil that multiple peoples pray in and toward.

As a Jewish Elder I beseech you to stand on the right side of history and call for an Immediate and permanent Ceasefire. Only with a ceasefire will the long process toward justice, safety, and sovereignty for both Palestinians and Israelis begin. Only with a ceasefire will the rights of hostages, prisoners, and 2.4 million Gazan human beings facing starvation and death be restored.

. Help lead the very overdue way forward by calling for an Alexandria Ceasefire resolution NOW.

Todah rabah uv’racha, Thank you and blessings,

Amy Horowitz, 801 North Pitt Street Apt 1408, Alexandria, VA 22314

amyhorow@iu.edu (614-448-6354) www.amyhorowitz.org

www.roadworkcenter.org, www.livingjerusalem.org

My name is Zeina Azzam and I speak to you as a Palestinian community member in Alexandria. I am asking the City Council to pass a resolution for a permanent ceasefire in Gaza.

Gaza is being starved right now, in real time. According to the UN, Palestinians in Gaza are 80 percent of all people facing famine or catastrophic hunger worldwide. Whatever your politics, I hope this fact gives you pause. Deliberately starving a civilian population is cruel, violent, and a war crime. Israel is also bombing areas in Gaza that it said would be safe, killing and injuring hundreds each day. In the city of Rafah, 1.4 million human beings are a captive population trying to survive the winter in streets, tents, and bombed out buildings. Gazans in the north have run out of food and receive no aid. This genocide must be stopped, and a ceasefire is the first step.

Many of these Gazans became refugees, like my parents, in 1948. And although I speak to you as a Palestinian American, I am really speaking to you as a human being. My identity is important to me, but this issue is about humanity and a deep caring for others. I am profoundly anguished and grieving.

What does this have to do with Alexandria? A ceasefire resolution is a moral stance. It is the right thing to do. There are Palestinian families in Alexandria who have lost family members and friends in this war on Gaza and in the occupied Palestinian Territories. We need you to hear us, acknowledge our pain, show empathy. The global is local; wars and genocides affect all of us and generations to come. And millions of federal tax dollars from Alexandria residents continue to fuel Israel's war on Gaza.

A ceasefire resolution would signal that our city champions justice and human rights. In the past, city council took a stand against the genocide in Darfur and passed a peace resolution before the invasion of Iraq, so there are precedents.

I advocate for this ceasefire for both sides. Some of you might believe that a ceasefire resolution is "divisive" for Alexandria. But you've voted on issues that were divisive before, including the current sports arena. I think it would be divisive NOT to pass such a resolution. We Palestinian members of Alexandria, and our diverse allies — including Arab Americans and Muslim and Jewish Americans — often feel we are unacknowledged and ignored. We implore you to do something about the urgent genocide unfolding in Gaza. We need you to pass a ceasefire resolution.

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CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: jennifer salan <jennifersalan@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2024 4:13 PM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Docket Item 3

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Hello, as an Alexandria taxpayer and voter, I would like a member of the City Council to introduce a resolution supporting a Ceasfire to save the lives of Gaza's people. The city has already made gestures of support for Israel following the terrorist attack of Oct. 7. Efforts to stop genocide deserve support as well and here Alexandria is well placed to act having previously stood against the genocide in Darfur.

Alexandria is on the forefront of working to right systemic wrongs on many fronts. We have an opportunity in this moment to be on the right side of history and send a message that our community objects to a genocide which is backed by Alexandrians federal tax dollars.

Please send a message of hope and introduce a ceasefire resolution for Gaza.
Thank you,
Jennifer Salan

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Alison O'Connell
02/24/24

Next week, the city will share a proclamation about Irish American Heritage Month. It notes the "numerous people of Irish descent who are active in [the city's] cultural, economic, political and social life." I am one of those people. My Irish heritage is very important to me and is a large part of my family identity.

However, like many contemporary Irish Americans, the political aspect of our history was not something my family talked about. I learned about it in my twenties and much of it shocked me. The Irish did not just happen to migrate all over the world. The Irish were colonized, occupied and subjected to a genocide. I heard about the potato famine all my life, but didn't understand that it was not just a horrible accident of nature, but a deliberate, structured policy by British leadership to deprive people of food. Ireland still produced many crops other than potatoes but they were exported out of Ireland to England for use and sale. 400,000 Irish people died and over two million left Ireland. This worked excellently for English leaders who wanted their land.

Today, we are watching the Israeli state use famine in much the same way. Over 30,000 people have already died from Israel's indiscriminate bombing. A staggering number. But many more people will die from disease and starvation, and that is a deliberate choice. Aid trucks into Gaza are being blocked. When they make it through they are being swarmed by hundreds of desperate people. People in northern Gaza are eating animal feed, grass, and rotten potatoes. Babies are starving to death because their mothers can't produce any milk and there is nothing left to feed them. I have seen videos of desperate parents feeding their newborns anything they can in the hopes of saving their lives.

You might hear this and say, alright, what does this have to do with Alexandria? Since October, when the city made an outright verbal and visual declaration of support for Israel, we have reached out to city leadership many times. We have asked them to apologize for that. We have asked them to affirm the rights of their Palestinian residents. We have asked them to do what over 60 brave city governments in this country have already done, and call for a ceasefire. Thus far I have not seen the city even use the word Palestinian. It's as if they think if they ignore the heartbreak, terror and sorrow of their Palestinian, Arab and Muslim residents it will just conveniently fade away.

I do not believe our city has the right to celebrate Irish-American heritage while it ignores Palestinian-American suffering. How can you claim to celebrate the resilience of the Irish people and the trauma that resilience is paired with it, if you can't renounce another genocide that is happening right now? It's an insult and a disgrace.

As an Irish American, I urge you to speak out against this genocide, and to do it loudly. Please support a Ceasefire resolution.

My name is Rose Esber. I am a member of the Virginia Coalition for Human Rights and Jewish Voice for Peace.

Palestine—Israel was **never** about **religion**. It was **always** about the land.

Palestinians **had the land**. Israel wanted the land **but not** the Palestinians. In 1948, Israel took the land by force, expelled over 800,000 Palestinians, and destroyed over 500 towns and villages. Israel continues to take Palestinian land in the West Bank and Jerusalem. Israel is destroying Gaza to take the land and expel or kill the Palestinians.

Israel is committing genocide in Gaza. Carpet bombing civilians is not defense; it is a war crime. Starving and denying water, medicine, shelter, electricity and fuel to civilians are war crimes. Israel's actions have been condemned by the International Court of Justice, the International Criminal Court, the UN Security Council, the UN General Assembly, US federal court, many governments, U.S. cities, and organizations. Israeli scholar Raz Segal said, Gaza is "a textbook case of genocide."

There is NO safe place in Gaza. Israel has killed over 38,000 people in 140 days and displaced over two million people. There are over 17,000 Palestinian orphans in Gaza. Israel has destroyed the healthcare system and infrastructure. A doctor from Chantilly, VA called what he witnessed in Gaza "annihilation."

Israel is able to continue its genocide and ethnic cleansing with US government support. American taxpayers give Israel over \$4 billion a year. That is \$2.7 million from Alexandria and \$107 million from Virginia.

Ceasefire is a local issue! Many Alexandria residents have family in Gaza and in Israel. We have lost thousands of family members and friends across Virginia. My family is sheltering and being starved in the Holy Family Catholic Church in North Gaza. I also have family in Lebanon and Syria where the US and Israel are bombing civilians. Alexandria has many refugees from Iraq, where the United States is also bombing. And Alexandria is already receiving traumatized Palestinian refugees from Gaza.

A permanent ceasefire will protect Palestinians, Israelis, the hostages, and US troops. American soldiers are being sent to the region to protect apartheid, occupation, and genocide—and for a potential devastating war with Iran. A majority of Americans support ceasefire.

As elected officials, your voice matters. We want our city to support morality and humanity. We want Alexandria to be the first city in Virginia to call for a ceasefire to demonstrate our city's commitment to US and international laws, and equal human rights. Silence is complicity. Please, vote for a ceasefire resolution to stop the genocide in Gaza.

CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: Mariam C <mariam.creedon@gmail.com>
Sent: Saturday, February 24, 2024 2:20 PM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Request that Alx Council call for a ceasefire

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Hello,

I have lived in Old Town Alexandria 12 years and am raising my two small children in the SE Quadrant with my husband. Each of my husband and I pay local taxes, and we own property in the City. I ask that Alexandria recognize the humanitarian crisis in Palestine and: 1) call for an immediate ceasefire (joining the growing number of cities similarly amplifying the voices of their citizens to demand peace) and 2) divest all funds from ongoing conflict and spending from a government that has been found to be plausibly committing genocide (joining many other institutions pledging to divest from apartheid regimes) .

This is an opportunity for our city to support human rights in the very moment it is needed, and, at the same time, strengthen our local community by showing residents it is a safe place to speak and live no matter our national origin, religion, or identity.

Thank you.

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February 24, 2024

Mayor, Vice Mayor, Members of City Council,

My name is Amanda Eisenhour, lifelong Alexandrian and product of ACPS, and I am joining the call to our city council to pass a resolution calling for a ceasefire in occupied Palestine.

Our officials have told me again and again that this genocide is not a local issue, and our city does not have any business taking a moral stand against the slaughter taking place so far from home.

Why, then, did the city pass a resolution opposing the invasion of Iraq in 2003, and the genocide in Sudan in 2006?

What about the 2.7 million in Alexandria taxes being used to subsidize the bombs Israel is using to slaughter children?

What about the untold hundreds of thousands in our investments and city pension funds in companies doing business with Israel.

Why are localities across the country, such as Minneapolis, Atlanta, and even Howard County Maryland calling on our federal government to withdraw its financial backing of genocide and require an immediate ceasefire?

All of our communities are home to Palestinians and Palestinian Americans who have lost loved ones abroad and faced discrimination at home. Most of us are taxpayers, watching our tax dollars fund the bombs and bullets massacring families in Palestine.

Will this resolution end the slaughter? Of course not. But failing to call for a ceasefire would be an immense act of cowardice.

I want my city to be remembered for disavowing genocide and standing up for Alexandrians in the face of unfathomable hatred and violence.

I want my city to reassure its residents that we can recognize injustice, and do everything in our power to combat it.

Thank you,

Amanda Eisenhour

CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov

From: Lonny Schulman <lonnykevinsschulman@gmail.com>
Sent: Friday, February 23, 2024 10:48 PM
To: CouncilComment@alexandriava.gov
Subject: [EXTERNAL]Public Comment for 2/24 Meeting

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Dear City Council,

My name is Lonny Schulman. I am a Jewish man, albeit not religious. I do not normally introduce myself as Jewish, but this part of my identity is currently more important than ever. As I write this, Israel is carrying out a genocide and claiming it is for the safety of the Jewish community. In other words, they are uprooting Palestinians from their homes, murdering them in the tens of thousands and doing it all in my name. I am enraged at this atrocity. I am even more enraged that it is under a banner carrying the Star of David. And I am further enraged that my city's leaders have refused to even condemn it.

It is public knowledge that Israel is committing a genocide. Israel's soldiers show off their murders and what they have stolen from the people they've killed on social media. I do not post most of my art on social media; my greatest passion feels too personal. Yet the protection of the United States has let an army feel emboldened to post their war crimes on social media, even their profile pictures on dating apps. These war crimes that they are bragging about for the world to see include killing thousands of civilians, videos and pictures of their torture of Palestinians, destroying their homes and stealing their possessions.

I personally find that any country whose soldiers not only commit war crimes, but boast about them is a threat on a global scale. Israel is a threat to me and the rest of the Jewish community. As much as I hate to imagine it, if Israel successfully settles Gaza, I fear that I and the Jewish community will be the next victims to be uprooted from their homes. This precedent of a genocide having such publicity is a terrifying one that I do not want to see happen ever again. These are the consequences you may face for not doing what it is in your power against this atrocity.

Sincerely,

Lonny Schulman

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