

4-13-24

Good morning, councilmembers.

I am joining my fellow Alexandrians here today to call on our city council members to introduce and pass a ceasefire resolution as soon as possible.

As the IDF has murdered nearly 35,000 Palestinians and displaced, starved, and injured millions more, it is far too late for Alexandria to be calling for a ceasefire. At this point, doing so is neither radical nor unprecedented: over 132 municipalities in the U.S. have called for a ceasefire. That includes Harrisonburg and Charlottesville here in Virginia.

Alexandria prides itself as a bastion of human rights, touting a perfect scorecard from the Human Rights Campaign and celebrating the passage of the "ALL Alexandria Resolution No. 2974", which commits our local government to creating an Alexandria that is "a caring, kind, compassionate, fair, just, and equitable city that is an affordable, livable community for ALL."

It bears mentioning, then, that the city council has made no effort to respond to the statement passed by its own Human Rights Commission on March 20th, without opposition, in support of a ceasefire resolution. I find it not only ironic, but incredibly disappointing, that the council won't even allow a resolution on the agenda, despite a clear statement from the body to whom the city entrusts deliberation and advising around human rights in support of the resolution.

We would love to move past the discussion around a ceasefire, which is no longer a controversial declaration, but the absolute bare minimum for any elected official to support.

We have begun to research the city's investments to understand our ties to the Israeli apartheid state, and the ways in which not just our federal, but our local tax dollars are implicated in perpetuating genocide. While opaque due to high levels of diversification and investment in funds not permitted to disclose individual investments, we hope this process will be productive and hope for the cooperation of city officials as we attempt to understand exactly how public funds are being used.

We would love to open up more citywide conversation about anti-arab hate, as well as rampant islamophobia, anti-semitism, and other types of hate speech experienced by Alexandria residents. We have proposed, for a second year in a row, that the city commemorate the 1948 Nakba, the mass displacement of Palestinians from their ancestral homes by the violence of Israeli settlers backed by Western governments.

But if there is still no political will for the bare minimum of calling for a ceasefire and to cease the supply of weapons used to indiscriminately murder civilians, how could we be ready for those conversations? How can we claim to be a “a caring, kind, compassionate, fair, just, and equitable city for ALL Alexandrians?” if we ignore the unanimous recommendation of our own Human Rights Commission? How can we live with ourselves as we fund the mass destruction of civilian life across the globe?