

A testimony by Fariha Khalid,
A resident of Catonsville, MD; A doctoral Student in Public Policy at University of
Maryland Baltimore County; and a human being who is devastated witnessing mass
killings of and violence against children, women, and men in Palestine
Before the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee In Support of HJ0002,
Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine
March 4, 2024

Dear Chair Healey, Vice Chair Holmes Jr., and the Delegates of the Rules and Executive Nominations Committee,

My name is Fariha Khalid, and as a resident of Maryland, I thank you for the opportunity to present this testimony in support of HJ0002, 'Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine,' introduced by Delegate Acevero. I appreciate Delegate Acevero for being a staunch, steadfast, and courageous advocate for a long-term ceasefire during one of the most atrocious events of our lifetime. His efforts represent the concerns several communities in Maryland who are scared, sickened, and devastated by witnessing the barbarism committed by the Israeli regime and its military over the past 150 days, plunging the humanity to the lowest of the low.

In the past 150 days, we in Maryland, just like the entire world, have incessantly seen unjust and vile killings of more than 30,000 Palestinians through bombings that have exceeded the levels of destruction of the nuclear bombs and those dropped in Afghanistan over the course of several years. We have seen parents struggling to identify and collect the body parts of their children, doctors performing surgeries without anesthesia, and families deliberating on decisions whether to sleep separately or under one roof; so, when a bomb strikes, should some family members survive, or should they all get killed together?

And all this is happening to a people who have experienced the most devastating conditions over the past 75 years, as reported by major international humanitarian organizations, including restrictions on food, water, and fuel. There are children and elderly in Gaza who have never seen a life outside of the inhumane occupation. For long they have lived in large-scale refugee camps, constantly fearing death, starvation, or being taken away by the Israeli forces as hostages and political prisoners.

For those who say that this is not a local issue, or that this is not an issue affecting Maryland, let me say that my community and our allies are the living proof that this issue

is affecting Marylanders and Americans. We represent a growing majority of people of all faiths, identities, and lived experiences, not backed by wealthy lobbies or interest groups but our shared humanity. As Americans and as Marylanders, who refuse to stand by as our tax dollars fund the vile actions of Israel, we urge you call to support this bill. We would like to see our tax dollars go toward humanitarian assistance to feed families with food and water, protect children from cold, and reinstate medical supplies in hospitals. We would rather that our tax dollars be invested in fostering human dignity and social justice here in Maryland, in the United States, and across the globe. What hurts us, is to see that our money being unconditionally given to a regime that indiscriminately drops bombs or opens fire to instill collective punishment on people whose lands it occupies and whose lives it controls.

In Maryland like many other states across the county, there have been reports of increased hate crimes, restrictions on free expression, fear of retaliation, and doxing. Many people have legitimate concerns for their physical and psychological well-being. Therefore, I also urge you to support Delegate Martinez's bill HJ0008, 'Condemning Islamophobia, Anti-Palestinian Hate, and Antisemitism.' Along with this bill (HJ0002), HJ0008 symbolizes that we live in a connected world – a world where the persecution of one group distresses and threatens communities across borders. And striving for justice truly means becoming the voice for the oppressed, no matter how distant they are.

I have faith in this assembly that it will lead the way in strengthening the voices of millions of Americans who want an immediate and permanent ceasefire so that we can work toward a free and dignified Palestine. Lastly, I want for all of us to recall that Palestinians showed up for George Floyd; they stood up for social justice within our country. Today, let's send them and the world this message:

“Maryland calls for justice in Palestine.
Maryland calls for a permanent ceasefire.”