

My name is Mary Ella Jourdak, I am a resident of 10 Silverwood Circle, Annapolis, Maryland, 21403 and I write this today, February 29th, 2024 - the 145th day of devastating violence and destruction in Palestine. It is our moral duty to call for an end to this violence, for a long-term ceasefire, a return of all hostages and prisoners, and an expeditious delivery of aid to the people suffering from a lack of basic food, sanitation, and medical supplies.

While the death toll grows daily, it has surpassed thirty thousand Palestinians in the last few days. Each day also imperils the hostages taken, with bombardment a regular occurrence and such a serious lack of supplies making it in to the Gaza Strip.

Palestinians are living in apocalyptic conditions with a medical system ground to dust, no schooling or work to be found, and the displacement of an entire population to areas without basic sanitation or other civil infrastructure. Millions are on the brink of starvation, with many falling over that precipice daily. Children as young as two months old are dying of starvation or malnutrition. I have seen videos of their emaciated bodies, their hollow cheeks, and their grieving parents.

Beyond these clips and photographs, I have seen what destruction has been wrought in the form of collective punishment against a population weakened and dehumanized by siege for many years. These images are deeply troubling, deeply moving - indeed, there are many people like myself who have been forever changed by watching their government fund and largely stand behind atrocities. We must ask for change, even if it requires begging for scraps of humanity. I am not too proud to write this on my proverbial knees asking for the passage of this bill.

I have been told that this is not an issue that Maryland should attend to. But the full passage of HJ0008, which affirms that the State of Maryland stands in solidarity with both the government and people of Ukraine shows that Maryland is capable of addressing violence happening in foreign lands. The existence of Executive Order 01.01.2017.25 which is an anti-BDS bill that requires all state contractors to pledge not to boycott the government of Israel, shows that we are both morally and monetarily beholden to what happens to Israel. We are deeply entrenched in the happenings in Israel and Palestine here in Maryland, and so we must act.

Where Maryland leads, other states will follow. We have been at the forefront of other justice issues, and our resolution could be a small stepping stone along the path to a more peaceful and just world for all. Please, support HJ0002. Support humanity, support peace.