



March 4, 2024

Honorable Chair Anne Healey
House Rules & Executive Nominations Committee
H-4 State House
100 State Circle
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Testimony FAVORABLE for HJ0002 Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine

Dear Chair Healey and Members of the House Rules & Executive Nominations Committee:

On behalf of the Council on American-Islamic Relations, I thank you for this opportunity to testify in strong SUPPORT of House Joint Resolution HJ0002 Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine. CAIR is America's largest Muslim civil rights and advocacy organization.

This resolution conveys to Maryland's Congressional Delegation the Maryland General Assembly's support for an immediate, long-term ceasefire in Israel and occupied Palestine, the return of all hostages, and the delivery of adequate humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

For 149 days and 75 years, the world has witnessed unspeakable atrocities and war crimes committed by the Israeli military against civilians in Gaza, funded by billions of U.S. taxpayer dollars, including millions of Marylanders' tax dollars. At least 30,000 Palestinians have been killed in the last five months of indiscriminate carpet bombings and sniper fire, the majority of whom are children and women. There is no safe zone in what has long been described for decades as the largest open-air prison in the world, which has been under land, air and sea blockade by Israel.¹

In recent months, 1.9 million Palestinians have been displaced from their homes, and those who survived are stranded in the small border city of Rafah facing an impending ground invasion. Refugee camps, U.N. schools and hospitals in Gaza have been decimated by bunker buster bombs supplied by our tax dollars. There is no operational hospital in Gaza. The humanitarian crisis has reached unimaginable proportions as the Israeli government continues to block desperately needed food, water, aid and supplied while famine grips the region. Infants are dying due to lack of formula. Families have resorted to drinking wastewater, eating grass and donkey and horse meat to simply survive as trucks loaded with food, water and aid line the border, blocked from entering by the Israeli government.

Both the United Nation's highest court the International Court of Justice, and U.S. district court judge Jeffrey White have declared the plausibility of genocide in Gaza.^{2,3}

Supporting a ceasefire in Palestine and Israel is a local issue impacting thousands of Marylanders, including hundreds of directly impacted constituents from Gaza whose loved ones were among the tens of thousands of civilians killed by Israeli forces in recent weeks.

The urgency of this moment cannot be overstated. Innocent lives deserved to be protected and valued, regardless of whether they are Israeli or Palestinian. A ceasefire yesterday would have protected the lives of hundreds of innocent people who are being killed today. Collective punishment should never be acceptable. We would never fathom bombing a school full of children in order to take out a school shooter. Subjecting the entire 2.2 million population of Gaza to relentless violence and suffering is unconscionable, immoral and inhumane.

Nearly 70 percent of Americans support the U.S. calling for a permanent ceasefire and a de-escalation of violence in Gaza.⁴ Howard and Anne Arundel Counties recently joined at least 66 members of congress including Representatives Jamie Raskin, Kweisi Mfume and David Trone, dozens of U.S. cities and counties in calling for a ceasefire to end the violence and bloodshed.⁵

As discussions around this resolution unfold within the Maryland General Assembly, it is crucial to resist disinformation and extrapolations, and to prioritize the sanctity of human life. By supporting a ceasefire, lawmakers are championing a humane stance that aligns with most Americans and fosters a commitment to peace, diplomacy, and the well-being of innocent lives on all sides. You are supporting the safe release of all hostages and political prisoners including thousands of Palestinian children who are unjustly detained by the Israeli government.

This assembly rightfully unanimously passed a resolution supporting Ukraine not long ago. This ceasefire resolution similarly serves as a beacon of empathy, acknowledging to Congress and the Biden administration of the urgent need to halt the ongoing deadly violence, promote humanitarian efforts, and to pave the way for meaningful negotiations towards a just and lasting solution.

History will judge us by where we stood in this staggering crisis. Protecting innocent lives should never be a controversial issue. It should never be controversial to call for a ceasefire especially to save the lives of innocent children. Supporting HJ0002 is supporting humanity, dignity, peace and freedom.

We respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sincerely,

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1. <https://www.hrw.org/news/2022/06/14/gaza-israels-open-air-prison-15>
2. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/01/gaza-icj-ruling-offers-hope-protection-civilians-enduring-apocalyptic#:~:text=The%20ICJ%20found%20it%20plausible,under%20siege%20in%20Gaza%2C%20and>

3. <https://www.aljazeera.com/news/2024/2/1/us-judge-urges-biden-to-examine-support-for-plausible-genocide-in-gaza>
4. <https://www.dataforprogress.org/blog/2024/2/27/voters-support-the-us-calling-for-permanent-ceasefire-in-gaza-and-conditioning-military-aid-to-israel#:~:text=Around%20two%2Dthirds%20of%20voters,escalation%20of%20violence%20in%20Gaza.>
5. https://www.cair.com/press_releases/cair-applauds-second-maryland-county-to-support-a-gaza-ceasefire/