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WRITTEN TESTIMONY

House Resolution HJ002 - Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine

Rules and Executive Nominations Committee

March 4, 2024

OPPOSE

Background: House Resolution 002 (HJ002) would have the General Assembly of Maryland convey to Maryland's Congressional Delegation its support for an immediate, long-term ceasefire in Israel and Gaza, the return of all hostages, and delivery of adequate humanitarian aid to the Palestinian people.

Written Comments: The Baltimore Jewish Council (BJC) represents The Associated: Jewish Federation of Baltimore, all of its agencies, as well as the organized Jewish Community of Greater Baltimore. We are adamantly opposed to this ill-informed resolution, riddled with dangerous inaccuracies meant to divide communities instead of unite them. The BJC understands the idea of supporting a Ceasefire to prevent further loss of life, and let us be clear: We abhor the loss of innocent life, whether Jewish or Arab, Israeli, or Palestinian. War is horrible. Like most Americans, we want the war to end. But also like most Americans, we want a ceasefire **only once the hostages are released and Hamas is removed from power.**

This Ceasefire resolution does not align with American values. It absolves Hamas, an organization recognized by our government as a terrorist organization, of responsibility, and attempts to strip Israel of the basic right to self-defense that every nation has. This resolution promotes antisemitic vitriol; divides the community; and will only exacerbate the rhetoric that has already led to the astronomical rise of antisemitism and Islamophobia. Since October 7th, antisemitic incidents have increased almost 400%.

To understand the background of this Ceasefire resolution, we would like to let you know about the organization that brought it to Annapolis. This resolution was written and shopped to legislators by CAIR Maryland, a known antisemitic organization, whose national and state leadership have used false narratives. They have been relentless and unapologetic in their antisemitism and flat-out dangerous lies about the war in Israel and Gaza. On the national level, CAIR's leader said he "was happy to see" the terrorist attacks which



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brutally murdered 1,200 innocent Israeli civilians.¹ He also used dangerous age-old antisemitic tropes to state that Jews control politicians.²

In Maryland, the day after the horrific attacks, and days before Israel launched a counterattack, CAIR Maryland's leader was in front of the White House cheering on the atrocities, and a photo was proudly posted on CAIR National's X page.³ Since then the leader of CAIR Maryland has posted hundreds of times on their verified Facebook page promoting unabashedly antisemitic rhetoric and dangerously false information about the actions of Israel. They have stated that babies were not actually killed on October 7th, that Israel is harvesting organs from Palestinians, and that Jews control politicians. These are all antisemitic tropes -- Holocaust denial (denial of Jewish deaths), blood libel, and Jewish control of government.⁴

The specifics in this the resolution are alarming for the falsities and one-sided nature. First, it does not require the return of all hostages as a condition of the ceasefire, only suggesting they be returned at some point. Second, it only mentions the actions of the Israeli government (with non-verified, inaccurate data) without mentioning Hamas or the horrific attacks on Israeli civilians that included rape, murder and more. Third, it falsely states that Israel targets civilians, when Israel does more than any country to protect civilian lives, whereas Hamas purposely uses Palestinian civilians (and the hostages) as human shields.⁵ It also states that Israel occupies Palestine, but Israel withdrew from Gaza in 2005 and has not occupied the area since, whereas the terrorist organization Hamas came to power in 2007, bringing devastation to the Palestinian people. The resolution also purposely and continuously mentions antisemitism, islamophobia and anti-Palestinian/anti-Arab bigotry, but leaves out anti-Israeli hate. These are just a few of the one-sided and false narratives riddled throughout the resolution.

Let's not bring that to our State. Instead, the General Assembly should rise above the divisive discourse of supporting a one-sided Ceasefire resolution and reaffirm the values we should hold near and dear.

For these reasons we urge an unfavorable report on HJ002

The Baltimore Jewish Council, a coalition of central Maryland Jewish organizations and congregations, advocates at all levels of government, on a variety of social welfare, economic and religious concerns, to protect and promote the interests of The Associated Jewish Community Federation of Baltimore, its agencies and the Greater Baltimore Jewish community.

² https://jewishinsider.com/2023/12/nihad-awad-council-american-islamic-relations-israel-gaza-terror-attacks/

⁵ https://www.idf.il/en/mini-sites/the-hamas-terrorist-organization/how-is-the-idf-minimizing-harm-to-civilians-ingaza/#:~:text=As%20part%20of%20its%20efforts,impending%20airstrike%20in%20his%20vicinity.

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¹ https://www.nytimes.com/2023/12/08/us/politics/white-house-cair-nihad-awad.html

³ https://twitter.com/CAIRNational/status/1711158966992941475

⁴ See attached screenshots below.

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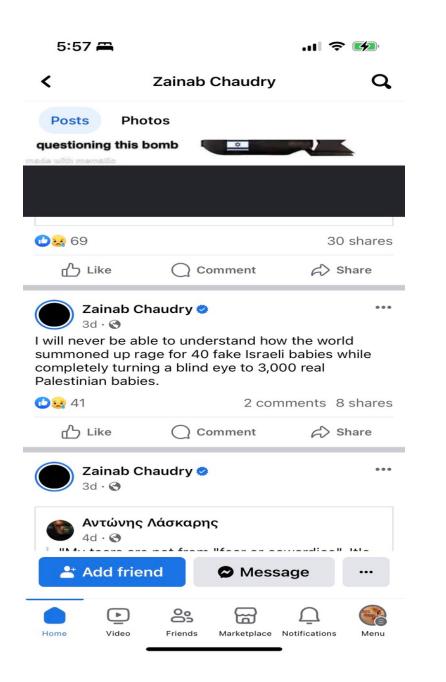
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Gaza media office: vital organs stolen from 80 bodies of Palestinians returned to Karam Abu Salem border crossing

"'After examining the bodies, it is clear that the features of those killed had changed greatly, in a clear indication that the Israeli occupation had stolen vital organs from them," the statement went on to say.

The media office said this is not the first time that Israel has "mutilated" Palestinian bodies, and has called for an independent international investigation committee into the kidnapping of Palestinian bodies and theft of their vital organs.

'Israel has previously exhumed graves in Jabalia and stole some of the bodies, in addition to the fact that it still has dozens of bodies from the Gaza Strip in its possession,' the office said."



Zainab Chaudry 🥏

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it's no surprise that organizations like the ADL who prioritize the interests of the most right wing, fascist administration in the history of Israel, want to smear and silence voices raising awareness about Israel's war crimes and the genocide in Gaza by falsely labeling them as anti-Semitic

but it also shouldn't surprise anyone that lawmakers bought and paid for by Israel's lobbying arm in the United States at every level of the government are also trying to distort, twist and silence us

one could ask where is their humanity, but we already know the answer. you can try to silence one voice, ten voices, but you can't silence millions.

criticism of apartheid, genocide, illegal occupation, settler colonial violence, crimes against humanity isn't antisemitic. it's pro-humanity.

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