



**Maryland General Assembly**  
**House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee**  
**March 4, 2024**

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ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) is pleased to submit this testimony in **opposition to HJ2, *Supporting a Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine.***

Since 1913, the mission of ADL (the Anti-Defamation League) has been to “stop the defamation of the Jewish people and to secure justice and fair treatment to all.” As a leading anti-hate organization, for decades one of the most important ways in which ADL has fought against bigotry and antisemitism has been by investigating extremist threats across the ideological spectrum, producing research to inform the public, and working with law enforcement, educators, the tech industry, and elected leaders to promote best practices to effectively address and counter these threats. Further, ADL conducts an annual *Audit of Antisemitic Incidents*, which is widely used by law enforcement, educational institutions, elected officials, and the community at large to not only respond to antisemitic incidents, but also to create change.

**October 7<sup>th</sup> and the Current Crisis**

The October 7<sup>th</sup> assault on Israel by Hamas, a US-designated terrorist organization, was a barbaric massacre and the deadliest day for Jews since the Holocaust. Hamas terrorists slaughtered 1,200 people, including small children, women and men. Women were raped, people were beheaded and bodies mutilated. Hamas also kidnapped around 240 women, men, and children, and at least 129, including babies and the elderly, are still being held hostage in Gaza.

Israel is currently engaged in a military operation in Gaza aimed at securing the release of the hostages and dismantling Hamas to ensure that this terrorist organization is no longer able to carry out further attacks against Israel. Tragically, Hamas has intentionally positioned itself and its weapons among the civilian population of Gaza and is using innocent Palestinians as human shields against Israel. On a daily basis, Hamas continues to launch rockets into Israel population centers.

Hamas’ actions have unfortunately led to tremendous suffering in Gaza. Two things can be true: Our hearts break at the loss of innocent life in both Israel and Gaza, and the worsening humanitarian crisis unfolding in Gaza. At the same time, we can hold Hamas accountable for its actions on October 7<sup>th</sup> and for deliberately putting innocent Palestinians across Gaza in harm’s way in pursuit of their nefarious goals.

It is possible to care about Palestinians and condemn Hamas’ actions. It is possible to want a better future for Israelis and Palestinians and understand that what Hamas has done – and is capable of doing in the future – is contrary to the values we hold dear. It is possible to disagree

with the Israeli government and have moral clarity regarding Hamas and the atrocities of October 7<sup>th</sup>.

### **On Calls for a Ceasefire**

Nearly five months following the horrific Hamas attack on Israel on October 7<sup>th</sup> and the ensuing war in Gaza with a large humanitarian toll, it is understandable that calls are intensifying for an immediate ceasefire. We all hope for a cessation of hostilities, the return of all the hostages, a respite for the affected civilians in Gaza, and a future of peace and security for both Israelis and Palestinians. We are supportive of ongoing diplomatic efforts to negotiate a mutually agreed-to pause in fighting that would include the release of hostages, humanitarian assistance and lead to a more lasting ceasefire.

At the same time, many calls and resolutions for a ceasefire, place the entire onus of blame for the crisis on Israel, include demonizing and false language about Israel, fail to condemn (or often even mention) Hamas's atrocities on October 7<sup>th</sup> or the plight of the hostages being held in Gaza, and diminish or ignore the ongoing threat posed by Hamas to Israel. It is well-known that Hamas has a long history of breaking ceasefires, including recently. Hamas continues to threaten Israeli civilians. Its leaders have publicly stated they want to repeat the Oct 7<sup>th</sup> massacre all across Israel. They continue to actively fire an arsenal of missiles at Israeli cities and towns. Hamas would use any cessation of hostilities to restock, regroup and once again attack Israel.

We need a sustainable solution that provides security for Israelis and Palestinians alike and addresses humanitarian needs in Gaza. Any such arrangement must ensure releasing all the hostages and ensuring Hamas no longer poses a threat to Israelis or to the people of Gaza. Moreover, we have unfortunately seen across the country that many hearings and public comment on these resolutions have included antisemitic rhetoric including the demonization of Israel, Zionists and Jews. This at a time when Jews in the United States, indeed the world, are confronting an unprecedented level of antisemitic attacks.

Our elected leaders represent broad and diverse constituencies. The State of Maryland is not empowered to make decisions on behalf of the United States as it relates to foreign policy; these debates, resolutions and statements are therefore declaratory in nature. At a time of rising antisemitism across the country, including in the entire state of Maryland, this resolution is not constructive, nor aligned with the role of this legislature. Instead, we would encourage you to think about measures to bring communities together, rather than sow divisions at a time of rising hate, including here in Maryland, linked to the ongoing conflict.

**We urge the House Rules and Executive Nominations Committee to give HJ2 an unfavorable report.**