

## **An Open Letter From Congressional Staff:**

We are Jewish and Muslim staffers and allied staff across the Hill. Each day, we come to the United States Capitol to serve the American public. Our families, histories, and faith traditions are deeply rooted in Jerusalem, Israel, and Palestine. As the children of survivors of slavery, the Holocaust, colonialism, war, and oppression, we feel compelled to raise our voices in this moment.

Today, we write to implore our bosses, Members of the United States Congress, to join calls for an immediate ceasefire between Israel and Hamas. Millions of lives hang in the balance, including the 2.3 million civilians — half of whom are children — in Gaza, civilians in Israel, and Jews and Muslims around the world. This is especially urgent with antisemitism, anti-Muslim, and anti-Palestinian sentiment on the rise nationwide, which instigated the brutal murder of a six-year-old Palestinian-American child, Wadea Al-Fayoume.

We appreciate the Members' condemnations of the atrocities committed by Hamas against Israeli civilians. We join in mourning the loss of 1,300 Israelis murdered by these acts of terrorism and in prayer for those injured and the around 200 hostages in Gaza, including our fellow Americans, whose safe return is a priority for us all. We join Members of Congress and the international community's denunciation of the horrific war crimes Hamas has committed.

At the same time, we mourn for the Palestinian civilians who are enduring catastrophic suffering at the hands of the Israeli government. As of this writing, more than 6,000 bombs have been dropped on the Gaza Strip. More than 4,000 Palestinian civilians, including entire families, have been slain, and about 12,500 are injured.

Palestinians in Gaza are facing critical shortages of medicine, food, drinking water, fuel, and electricity following the Israeli government's brutal blockade. While President Biden and Secretary Blinken's diplomatic efforts to restore and provide humanitarian aid are crucial, this progress is fragile. As Muslims, Jews, and allies, we believe that denying these basic resources violates the tenets of our faiths, values, and our humanity.

We have appreciated seeing nearly every Member of Congress express quick and unequivocal solidarity with the Israeli people, but we are profoundly disturbed that such shows of humanity have barely been extended to the Palestinian people. Only a fraction have called for a ceasefire or at least cessation of hostilities. We believe that Palestinian civilians deserve to be remembered, mourned, and defended with the same rigor that Jewish Israelis deserve from the U.S. Congress.

Nationwide and in Congress, the voices calling for de-escalation and peace have been drowned out by those beating the drums of war. As Muslims and Jews, we are tired of reliving generational fears of genocide and ethnic cleansing. We are tired of leaders pushing us to blame each other, exploiting our pain and our histories to rationalize political agendas and justify violence. We all are calling on our elected officials to find a new way forward together, through unbreakable solidarity motivated by our humanity.

We sign this letter anonymously out of concern for our personal safety, risk of violence, and the impact on our professional credibility on Capitol Hill. We are worried that we could lose our jobs — ones we fulfill with unwavering commitment and profound patriotism — for publicly signing on to a plea for a ceasefire in a conflict that has taken more than 5,000 innocent Palestinian and Israeli lives.

The voices of Members of Congress hold immense power — we have seen it firsthand. We now ask them to use that power to protect civilians in imminent danger. We ask them to demand a ceasefire between Israel and Hamas and an immediate cessation of hostilities, the safe return of nearly 200 Israeli hostages, and the passage of essential humanitarian aid to the Gaza Strip. Only once this immediate hemorrhage ends can we turn our efforts to end the status quo of occupation, violence, and find pathways for lasting, sustainable peace for both Israelis and Palestinians.

Sincerely,

[TOTAL NUMBER] Staff of the United States Congress

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