



January 19, 2024

President Aaron Peskin
Members, Board of Supervisors
1 Dr. Carlton B. Goodlett Place
San Francisco CA, 94102

RE: File # 231263 “Calling for a Sustained Ceasefire in Gaza, Humanitarian Aid, Release of Hostages, and Condemning Antisemitic, Anti-Palestinian, and Islamophobic Rhetoric and Attacks”

Dear President Peskin and Members of the Board of Supervisors,

As I said last week, I almost never comment on or engage with nonbinding resolutions from the Board of Supervisors. This one warrants an exception.

Since the Board of Supervisors introduced their Gaza ceasefire resolution, and certainly since they passed it last week, our City has been angrier, more divided, and less safe. Sadly, that may have been the point. Their exercise was never about bringing people together; it was about choosing a side. And while late amendments mitigated this, the damage was already done.

At the Board’s hearing on this resolution, one man spoke about his family members who were killed by Hamas on October 7. People in the crowd made pig noises, devil horns with their hands, and screamed for him to “kill himself” as he walked out the chamber. Protestors surrounded a Jewish city employee in the restroom to intimidate him while he was doing nothing more than being present in his workplace. They shouted down and intimidated those who disagreed, including a legislator offering amendments citing the atrocious acts of Hamas.

At a Supervisor candidate debate on Wednesday, a candidate, who is Jewish, brought up these instances at the Board and the crowd booed him loudly. When he mentioned the documented sexual violence committed by Hamas, people yelled “liar” and continued jeering him throughout the event.

I think about that and I wonder: What if we replaced “Jewish” with “black” or “gay” or “Asian”? Would anyone speak up? I hope we would. I hope we will now.

If the women who were murdered, raped, or otherwise brutalized by Hamas — teenagers, grandmothers, babies — weren’t “Israeli women” but “Bay Area women,” would we allow their friends and relatives to be shouted down as “liars”? Or would we say, “No, that’s too far. We can disagree but that’s just wrong.”

No one in these crowds seems to be saying that. Sadly, demonization, heartlessness, and abject antisemitism have, it seems, become politically and socially acceptable among a certain subset of activists.



Since October 7th, I have spoken with numerous Jewish San Franciscans who tell me they don't feel safe in their own City. They were afraid to attend the last Board hearing, and they certainly wouldn't attend another. They are fearful of the growing acts of vandalism and intimidation, and the targeting of Jewish-owned businesses. They are worried this is the beginning of something worse, right here in San Francisco.

No one should feel unsafe in our communities. And no one should think that while advocating for peace abroad it's okay to stoke division and hate at home.

People I know and love have asked me to veto this resolution, to send a signal that this must stop, that the antisemitism we are seeing is unacceptable.

I have grappled with this request for ten days. It has kept me up at night. I've spoken with friends and faith leaders on all sides. I've prayed for clarity. And were it not for today's deadline, I would likely continue to do so.

A few things guide my decision today.

First, the Board of Supervisors should never have put our City in this position. City Supervisors are neither elected nor qualified to undertake complex foreign policy. Frankly, neither are Mayors. And it was naive to think two hearings and last-minute amendments were adequate to forge San Francisco's official position on a crisis as fraught as this. We should be creating opportunities for conversation, for people to rally around our common values, advocate for peace, and support human life. We should be coming together, supporting each other, seeking the cohesion at home that we hope for abroad. The Board has done the opposite, and I worry their irresponsibility will continue.

Second, my heart breaks for the people of Gaza, the victims of this war on all sides, and their relatives and friends around the world. The loss of life, including children, the violence, and destruction of homes and hospitals are hard to witness and even harder for those who have family members in the region. The war has caused irreparable harm in Gaza. I pray for peace and want to see this end.

Lastly, I must uphold the safety and cohesion of San Francisco. The anti-semitism in our City is real and dangerous. My veto would send this issue back to the Board of Supervisors, in whom I have no confidence on this issue. It would likely lead to yet more divisive, harmful hearings, which in turn would keep this matter and divisiveness front and center in our City, and fan even more antisemitic acts.

I cannot watch us divide ourselves even more. A leader, like a doctor, should be guided by the basic ethos to "do no harm," to not make a bad situation worse. The Board of Supervisors has put us in this terrible position and, unfortunately, after much consideration and prayer, the best thing I can do is try to quell it, try to turn down the volume and begin the healing. I must choose unity.

When we advocate for people thousands of miles away, we should still care for the people who are right here in San Francisco, the people who are in pain and are afraid. We are all San Franciscans. We don't close people off; we open our arms and our minds. And we must get through this together.

OFFICE OF THE MAYOR
SAN FRANCISCO



LONDON N. BREED
MAYOR

So let us behave as we believe. Let us reject those that seek to divide us. Let us show that life is sacred, that we are stronger united, and that we all deserve to express ourselves without fear, ridicule, retribution, or division.

I return this resolution without my signature.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "London Breed". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

London N. Breed
Mayor