



January 19th, 2024 ~ 9th of Shvat, 5784

We are 253 Rabbis and Rabbinical students, and other Jewish clergy across political affiliations, including Conservative, Reform, Modern Orthodox, Reconstructionist, Renewal and Mizrachi communities. At this moment of great moral reckoning, we are speaking out with one voice to fulfill the most sacred obligation in Jewish tradition: pikuach nefesh, saving a life.

Since October 20th, we have been organizing and advocating for a ceasefire in Israel/Palestine. Our understanding of the term “ceasefire” is clarified in our mission statement which states: “Ceasefire means no more bombing, no ground war. It means all Israeli hostages must be released now and immediate engagement by the international community toward a just and lasting peace in Israel/Palestine. Ceasefire is the only way to prevent more death and destruction.”

To date, over a dozen cities, counties and municipalities are taking up the call for a ceasefire. The ongoing killing of Palestinian people, the destruction of Gaza, and the capture of Israeli hostages and Palestinian prisoners calls on all people to speak out. We believe that it is fully within the purview of local municipalities to speak out in this way, to amplify the rising majority of Americans calling for a ceasefire. U.S. tax dollars are funding the Israeli siege on Gaza, and U.S. politicians are enabling this ongoing violence.

Many of our elected officials are hearing from their local Jewish institutional leadership opposing resolutions in support of a ceasefire. We are speaking as spiritual leaders, on behalf of a large and growing movement of Jews across the U.S. and in Israel who support calls for a ceasefire. We are proud to represent our tradition’s ancient commitment to shalom, peace, as well as the rich Jewish cultural history of anti-war activism.

We are grateful to see that many of the resolutions being put forth include opposition to antisemitism, Islamophobia, and all forms of racialized violence. As Rabbis we understand the traumas of the Jewish community. Jews, like all people, need, want, and deserve safety. This war on Gaza does not create Jewish safety. We understand antisemitism to be intertwined and inseparable from other forms of oppression. We reject all forms of oppression and call upon our colleagues from other faiths to speak out against antisemitism, and affirm the interdependence of all our peoples' safety and liberation. And, we seek to dispel the myth that criticizing Israel is inherently antisemitic.

We also want to lift up the importance of civil discourse in considering these resolutions. We urge all those speaking to these resolutions to choose their words carefully, mindful of the ways we all must guard against generalizations and stereotypes in our language. We invoke the rabbinic concept of *makhloket l'shem shamayim*, disagreements for the sake of heaven, in which all views are thoughtfully considered, and people are treated with respect.

As rabbis, we are committed to the care and safety of the Jewish people. As spiritual leaders, we are committed to the care and safety of all people. We root our work in *b'tzelem elohim*, the belief that all human beings were created in the likeness of the Divine. We believe that all people have equal right to justice, freedom and security and that one person's liberation cannot come at the expense of another's. Therefore we support cities, counties, and municipalities of all sizes, across the country, who are passing resolutions calling for a ceasefire. We believe this is an urgent and necessary action, to save lives, and create the conditions for humanitarian aid and negotiating a just peace.

We pray that those in power hear the calls of the masses of people saying in one voice, ceasefire now. May not another life be lost.