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Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis Unfolding in Gaza

Authored by Sarah El Qadah, Junior Senator
Co-Authored by Graciella James-Hickey, Sophomore Senator
Co-Authored by Taara Khan, First-Year Senator

ADDRESSED TO:

Sam Florio, Associate Vice President of Auxiliary Services



An Open Letter Addressing the Humanitarian Crisis Unfolding in Gaza

February 2024

An Open Letter to Santa Clara University administration, students, faculty, and staff,

Acknowledgment

We, the Associated Student Government of Santa Clara University, stand in solidarity with all those currently affected by the urgent humanitarian crisis in Palestine. We support core values in which all innocent civilians have equal dignity and a right to life, whether it is Palestinian or Israeli. **We condemn the horrific attack on October 7th, 2023. We condemn the targeting of all civilians, Palestinian and Israeli.**

As of January 29th, 2024, more than 26,000 Palestinians have been killed by the Israeli military, and 1,200 Israelis were killed in the October 7th attack led by Hamas. This tragedy has resulted in the deaths of at least 8,000 Palestinian children, as well as the internal displacement of at least 1.9 million civilians in Gaza. On December 28, 2023, three Israeli hostages were killed by their own Israeli troops despite attempts to surrender by waving a white flag, furthering the showcase of indiscriminate killing and indifference to human life. Thus, **we emphasize the importance of a ceasefire**, as millions across the globe have been demanding to end the carnage and the killings of Palestinians and Israelis. Where is our humanity if we cannot all agree that the senseless bombing of innocent children is wrong?

On December 29th, the South African government brought forth a case to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) accusing Israel of ‘genocidal acts.’ This case, coming from a nation that was once itself an apartheid state, *signifies the greater international concern* regarding this conflict. As of January 19th, each of the 30 hospitals and 53 health centers within northern Gaza and Gaza City have been rendered inoperable, and resource depletion has led emergency medical stations and over 137 healthcare facilities to become obsolete. It should be noted that the International Committee of the Red Cross states that the sick and wounded must be protected in times of armed conflict, and a failure to adhere to these rights is a **crime under international humanitarian law**.

With this in mind, all Palestinians in Gaza are left without access to basic resources such as water, food, electricity, and safe shelter. Places that should provide civilians safety have been severely affected,

resulting in the total [devastation of at least 94 educational institutions and 130 mosques as well as the targeting of 3 churches](#). According to [Al Jazeera](#), over 100 journalists have been killed, including members of their families, in addition to the [killing of 326 individuals on emergency medical services](#) as a result of Israel's continuous attacks on Gaza. **This complete and collective punishment of innocent Palestinian men, women, and children by the current Israeli government must be unequivocally condemned.**

Historical Context

The attack on October 7th, 2023, **did not occur in a vacuum**. This current crisis traces back decades and has resulted in the continuous forced displacement of Palestinians from historic Palestine, thus resulting in millions of Palestinians being permanent refugees in the diaspora. As a place to begin, we provide you with a variety of resources that briefly summarize the long-standing history of what is Palestine and Israel:

- [The United Nations: History of the Question of Palestine](#)
- [Al Jazeera Article: Israel-Palestine conflict: A brief history in maps and charts](#)
- The Ethnic Cleansing of Palestine, by Israeli historian Ilan Pappé
- The Hundred Years' War on Palestine, by Palestinian-American historian Rashid Khalidi

Impact on The United States

While thousands of Palestinians are constantly living under brutal occupation and fear, it is critical to remember that this conflict goes beyond the Middle East. Over the past four months, the global community has seen many heinous crimes committed against both the Palestinian and Jewish communities. Over the Thanksgiving weekend in 2023 in Burlington, Vermont, [three Palestinian students were targeted and shot](#) for wearing the Palestinian keffiyeh, sustaining severe life-altering injuries. On October 18th, 2023, [a group of four wearing traditional Jewish yarmulkes](#) were verbally and physically assaulted by a man spouting antisemitic sentiment. These are two of many devastating incidents that highlight the **national and global scale** of this conflict. It is crucial, now more than ever, to combat any, and all forms of hate and violence.

Education in the Context of Genocide

Education is a pillar of Ignatian Spirituality, as it [“develops the whole person, from intellect and imagination to emotions and conscience.”](#) In recognizing Santa Clara University's value of ‘Service to Others’, we stand against injustice regardless of where it is occurring. We stand in line with [The University's mission](#) to “promote a culture of service—service not only to those who study and work at

Santa Clara but also to society in general and **to its most disadvantaged members** as we work with and for others **to build a more humane, just, faith-filled, and sustainable world.**”

In prioritizing these values, it is crucial to recognize the impact of this crisis on education within the context of Palestine. The widespread destruction of [76% of schools in Gaza](#) has culminated in **the complete cancellation of the academic school year** for Palestinian students. According to [a United Nations report](#), “more than **625,000 students** and **22,564 teachers** have been left without access to education in Gaza” since October 7th, 2023. The existing and future generations of Palestinian students will be immensely affected by this regional education gap. This contributes to the **collective punishment** of the Palestinian people, attacking not only their right to live but also their desire to uplift their identity, culture, and existence through education.

We call on Santa Clara University to strongly stand by the right to education, as encompassed in the Jesuit tradition.

Our Community

In grounding ourselves on the mission of the wellness and betterment of the Santa Clara University community and beyond, we are committed to anti-violence and advocating for peace. Within our campus and the broader community, ASG **strongly condemns all forms of Islamophobia, anti-Arab racism, and antisemitism**. We ask that you report any cases to Campus Safety Services (CSS) at their main office line at (408) 554-4441 or at their emergency line at (408) 554-4444.

To combat this global crisis within the Santa Clara Community, ASG is working with various facets of university faculty, operations, and RSOs to provide many opportunities to inform, spur conversation, and deepen understanding of this conflict. We encourage students to engage in conversation with us through public comment each Senate period at 7:30 PM on Thursdays. We hope to honor our commitment as the Associated Student Government in supporting students during this tenuous period by hosting panels with reputable Santa Clara faculty, continuing to collaborate with the [University Library](#), holding educational movie screenings, and expanding opportunities for our campus community.

Call to Action

We, the Associated Student Government of Santa Clara University, **call upon the administration to support academic freedom and acknowledge the emotional turmoil of the last four months that Palestinian, Muslim, Arab, and Pro-Palestinian students have had to bear**. We ask that The University institutionally support faculty and anyone who desires to speak out on the current crisis amidst the [reports of scholars who self-censor](#) out of fear. We urge our student body to take action by staying educated and open-minded, starting important conversations within our communities, and keeping

informed inside and outside of the classroom. If you would like to [locate](#) and [contact your representatives](#) to call for a ceasefire, the resources have been provided.

We ask the administration to hear our calls and feelings as we bear witness to the suffering of the people of Palestine. As you stand in solidarity with the Israeli lives lost (as mentioned in President Sullivan’s “Safety and Belonging in our Community” letter addressed on October 15, 2023), we implore you to open up your hearts and stand with us in solidarity with the people of Palestine and the suffering civilians in Gaza. **We must all commit to speaking truth to power. We must all speak out against injustice anywhere, everywhere, and by whomever.**

In Solidarity,

The Associated Student Government of Santa Clara University

Endorsed by the following,



A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Tanvi Syed".

, Tanvi Syed, Multi-Cultural Center (MCC), Director

The Multi-Cultural Center (MCC) is home to 16 student-led organizations, comprising 200+ student leaders who serve 1000+ students every year. We, the MCC, collectively sign the above letter in solidarity with the Palestinian people and in hopes of educating our campus community.





, Imaan Qureshi, Muslim Student Association (MSA), Co-President

MSA is a safe place for all Muslims and allies of the Muslim community at Santa Clara University. We endorse this letter in solidarity with the Palestinian people and to support awareness, education, and justice.



Grace Davis, Santa Clara Community Action Program (SCCAP), Director

SCCAP is the largest and longest-running service and social justice organization at Santa Clara. We endorse this letter to support education, awareness, and a call to peace.





Nikhita Panjnani, Santa Clara Review, Editor-in-Chief

The Santa Clara Review is Santa Clara University's 150-year-old undergraduate-run global literary magazine. We are committed to the development of student literary talent, both in editorial and creative writing skills. The editors of the Review sign this letter in support of peace and awareness, with hope in our hearts.