

POSITION STATEMENT in Support of A Ceasefire and The Immediate Release of All Captives

¹The University of Minnesota, including students, staff, faculty, and administration, has a collective responsibility to contribute to the advancement of peace and justice on a global scale (1). The University Senate is integral to deliberation and decision-making, and its decisions impact the university's reputation and standing in the global academic community (2). Moreover, the University Senate recognizes the potential for positive change when diverse voices within the university community come together to address global challenges² (3).

On October 7th, 2023, Hamas militants carried out a devastating attack across southern Israel, targeting military installations and civilian areas alike³ (4). This act of violence resulted in an unprecedented loss of life, making it the deadliest day for the Jewish people since the Holocaust⁴ (5). The Israeli death toll from the October 7th attack is estimated to be at least 1,139⁵ (6). Furthermore, Hamas militants took an estimated 240 civilians as hostages during the attack⁶ (7).

In response to this attack, Benjamin Netanyahu's government initiated a catastrophic bombing campaign against the Gaza Strip with the stated intent of wiping out Hamas⁷. The Israeli government's bombing campaign has resulted in the death of at least 23,843 Gazans, most of whom are college-age or younger, including a minimum of 9,600 children^{8,9,10} (as of January 14th, 2024) (11). Israeli Defense Force airstrikes have targeted residential towers, schools, hospitals, refugee camps, and areas where civilians were instructed to flee¹¹ (12). Over 300,000, nearly 70% of Gaza's homes, have been damaged, and at least 46,000 completely destroyed (as of January 14th, 2024)^{12 13} (13). Approximately 370 schools and 221 places of worship have been damaged¹⁴ (14). Additionally, 30 of the 35 hospitals in Gaza have been rendered non-functional (as of January 14th, 2024)¹⁵ (15). The Israeli Defense Force has also initiated a ground invasion of Gaza, resulting in the destruction of homes, and rendering Al-Shifa Hospital, Gaza's leading

¹Numbers at the end of sentences serve as references, while those in footnotes denote sources without listed authors, particularly when multiple articles are from the same news outlet, like the two Al Jazeera pieces lacking specified authors. This numbering system aids in differentiation between sources.

² University of Minnesota Senate Website (1)

³ Federman and Adwan (The Associated Press)

⁴ Mardsen and Chen (Jerusalem Post)

⁵ Al Jazeera (2)

⁶ Al Jazeera (1)

⁷ Turak (CBS)

⁸ UN Press (United Nations (3))

⁹ Al Jazeera (2)

¹⁰ Mohammad and Chang (NPR)

¹¹ Sherlock and Wood (NPR)

¹² Malsin and Shah (WSJ)

¹³ Shurafa, Jeffery, and Keath (The Associated Press)

¹⁴ Al Jazeera (2)

¹⁵ Al Jazeera (2)

hospital, inactive¹⁶ (16). The Israeli government has displaced more than 80% (1.9 million people) of the Gazan population (as of January 14th)^{17 18} and has dramatically restricted access to humanitarian aid for Gazans^{19 20} (17).

The crisis in Israel and Palestine has real-world implications for students, faculty, staff, and administration here at the University of Minnesota and on college campuses across the United States (26). On November 25th, three Palestinian Americans were shot and injured while wearing keffiyeh scarves—a garment traditionally worn by Palestinians—near the University of Vermont’s campus in Burlington, VT ²¹ (27). In October, a student at Cornell made online threats encouraging others to stab and rape Jewish students and attack Cornell’s Center for Jewish Living ²² (28). In the Twin Cities, a Muslim woman was stabbed at a gas station as her assailant hurled Islamophobic slurs.²³ Across American college campuses, students have reported facing unprecedented Islamophobia, Anti-Semitism, and racism following October 7th^{24,25,26,27,28,29}.

The violence in the Middle East is emboldening bigots and putting the safety and mental well-being of Palestinian, Muslim, Arab, Jewish, and/or Israeli students, faculty, and staff at risk³⁰ (29). Pushing for peace and an end to hostilities may also help to ease tensions and keep students, faculty, and staff safe (30).

A ceasefire is the most viable first step to protect innocent civilian lives. It is incumbent upon the University of Minnesota and all its members to advocate for a lasting peace with freedom and dignity for all human lives (31).

Therefore, as the elected representatives of the students, staff, faculty, and administrators of the University of Minnesota, we join the collective call for a ceasefire and the immediate release of all captives (32).

¹⁶ Federman (The Associated Press)

¹⁷ Sullivan (NPR)

¹⁸ Haaretz (1)

¹⁹ The Associated Press

²⁰ Ahmed (Human Rights Watch)

²¹ Rathke and Ramer (The Associated Press)

²² NBC News

²³ Mitchell (CBS)

²⁴ Yang (Stanford University)

²⁵ Katz and Kravis (American University)

²⁶ Reinmann and Hernandez (Yale University)

²⁷ Rupertus (Princeton University)

²⁸ Illyas (George Washington University)

²⁹ Ratangee (Vanderbilt University)

³⁰ Mehta et al. (NPR)

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