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RICHMOND PEACE AND JUSTICE RESOLUTION FOR PALESTINE

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond advocates for the safety, dignity, freedom, and equality of all people, regardless of race, ethnicity, nationality, or religion; and

WHEREAS, the City of Richmond affirms that all human life is precious, and calls upon elected officials and residents to protect the lives of civilians and stand against indiscriminate and unlawful violence and stand for peace and justice; and

WHEREAS, experts describe the Israeli bombing of Gaza as among the most intensive, destructive, and deadliest in history (see here, here, and here); and

WHEREAS, as of January 4, 2024, according to Euro-med Human Rights Monitor, one thousand Israelis and more than 30,000 Palestinians – of whom almost 9,000 are children – have been killed and almost 60,000 injured; and whereas collective punishment is considered a war crime under international law; and

WHEREAS, Israel forces have targeted and killed more than 100 journalists, 241 medical workers, scores of teachers and other professionals since October 7th (See here and here); and

WHEREAS, UNICEF reports that of the thousands of children seriously injured by Israel bombings, as many as 1,000 have undergone surgery to amputate one or more limbs, many without anesthesia (See here, here, here, and here); and

WHEREAS, the above actions violate international human rights law which prohibits the targeting of civilians; and

WHEREAS, over half of Gaza's homes - 313,000 residential units have been destroyed or damaged (for comparison there are 110,000 housing units in Richmond - see here); 352 educational facilities damaged; 26 out of 35 hospitals bombed and no longer functioning; 102 ambulances damaged or destroyed; and 203 places of worship damaged or destroyed, including 201 mosques and 3 churches (See here and here); and

WHEREAS, approximately 2 million Palestinians have been forcibly displaced, and 2.2 million require urgent humanitarian assistance; and the forced relocation of persons is illegal under international law; and

WHEREAS, as of January 4, 2024, Palestinians in Gaza are now at great risk of mass starvation and dying in mass from preventable diseases due to Israel's continuing military campaign; and

WHEREAS, United Nations Secretary-General António Guterres has described the situation in Gaza as a

“crisis in humanity”, finding that “[g]round operations by the Israel Defense Forces and continued bombardment are hitting civilians, hospitals, refugee camps, mosques, churches and UN facilities — including shelters” leading to the “unparalleled and unprecedented” killing of Palestinian civilians, and United Nations human rights experts and legal scholars have raised the alarm about the risk of genocide in Gaza; and

WHEREAS, 55 Holocaust and Genocide Studies scholars issued a statement on December 9th, in which they describe precisely how the Israeli assault on Palestinians in Gaza and the West Bank meets the definition of genocide as codified in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (See A Textbook Case of Genocide, International Law and the Palestinian People; South Africa files case with International Court of Justice, and here, here, and here); and

WHEREAS, the indiscriminate killing of civilians, destruction of infrastructure, denial of access to food, water, and medicine, and the forced relocation of populations constitute elements of a policy of genocide, as meticulously detailed by the South African government in their application to the International Court of Justice (See here); and

WHEREAS, the United Nations General Assembly and United Nations Security Council voted on October 26 on a resolution calling for a sustained humanitarian ceasefire, with 120 nations voting yes,, 45 abstaining, and 14 voting no, including Israel and the United States; and on December 12, the UN approved a second resolution calling for a ceasefire, with 153 nations voting yes, 23 abstaining, and just 10 voting no, including Israel and the United States; and whereas on December 19, the UN voted to affirm the right of the Palestinians to self-determination, with 173 nations voting in favor, 10 abstaining, and 4 voting against: Nauru, Micronesia, Israel, and the United States; and on December 21, the Security Council voted on a ceasefire resolution, with 13 voting in favor and just two states, Russia and the United States, abstaining; and

WHEREAS, approximately \$3.6 million dollars *annually* collected from Richmond city residents goes to support the Israeli military; enough to fund 429 families with public housing for a year; 1,258 children receiving free or low-cost healthcare; the annual salaries of 39 elementary school teachers; 10,293 households with solar electricity produced for a year; cancellation of loan debt for 95 students (See here); and

WHEREAS, the additional \$14.5 billion in military aid to Israel approved by Congress costs Richmond city residents approximately \$13.7 million dollars; enough to fund 1600 families with public housing for a year;

4800 children receiving free or low-cost healthcare; the annual salaries of 148 elementary school teachers; 39,000 households with solar electricity for a year; cancelation of loan debt for 361 students (See [here](#)); and

WHEREAS, the Richmond City Council condemns anti-Semitic, anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and other racist attacks across the nation; and the doxxing of elected officials, professors, students, journalists, and other individuals speaking truth to power; and

WHEREAS, Israeli political leaders, military officials, media pundits, and ordinary citizens are using dehumanizing language to justify the killing of Palestinian civilians and destruction of Gaza and to call for the death and mass expulsion of all Palestinians from Gaza (See [here](#), pp. 59 - 70, for numerous instances of such language); and

WHEREAS, Israeli's weaponization of anti-Semitism and violence inflicted on the Palestinians are fueling antisemitism and leaving Jewish people here in the United States and elsewhere less safe; and

WHEREAS, major Jewish organizations, including Jewish Voice for Peace and If Not Now, and workers at more than 140 U.S. Jewish organizations, are calling for a ceasefire, the provision of humanitarian aid, an end to the occupation, equal rights for Palestinians and self-determination for Palestine; and

WHEREAS, Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, and B'tselem's issued reports designating Israel as an apartheid state, and whereas the Rome Statute defines apartheid as a crime against humanity (for more see [Inside Israeli Apartheid](#)); and

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Richmond takes seriously the entreaty of "Never Again," and that the historical memory of the Holocaust means fighting ethnic cleansing and apartheid everywhere; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the Richmond City Council joins numerous city councils across the United States, including the city council of Atlanta, Georgia, Oakland, California, Detroit, Michigan, and Richmond, California, to call for an immediate and permanent ceasefire; the release of all hostages, including Palestinians arbitrarily detained by Israel; the unrestricted entry of humanitarian aid into Gaza; the restoration of electricity, water, food, and medical supplies to Gaza; an end to the siege and blockade of Gaza; an end of the occupation; an end to US aid to Israel; and respect for international law by all parties; and

BE IT RESOLVED that the City of Richmond severs all relations with Israeli businesses until a permanent

ceasefire is implemented; humanitarian aid is delivered to the people of Gaza and the West Bank; and until UN mediated progress is made to end Israel's illegal occupation of Gaza and the West Bank and progress is made to establish equal rights for all Palestinians and sovereignty for Palestine; and

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Richmond City Council affirms its commitment to combat anti-Semitism, anti-Palestinian and anti-Arab racism, and Islamophobia; to ensure the dignity and safety of all its residents; and to serve as a model city of inclusion, diversity, and equal rights for all persons; and

FINALLY, BE IT RESOLVED that a copy of this Peace and Justice resolution be sent to the offices of: Richmond Mayor Levar Stoney; Virginia State Senators Ghazala F. Hashmi and Lamont Bagby; General Assembly Delegates Betsy Carr, Rae Cousins, and Michael Jones; Governor Glenn Youngkin; House Representative Jennifer McClellan; Senators Tim Kaine and Mark Warner; U.S. Secretary of State Antony Blinken; U.S. Secretary of Defense Lloyd Austin; U.S. Vice President Kamala Harris; and U.S. President Joe Biden.