

From: [REDACTED]
Sent: Friday, October 13, 2023 1:56 PM EDT
To: SchoolCom@cpsd.us <SchoolCom@cpsd.us>; Victoria Greer <vgreer@cpsd.us>
CC: [REDACTED]
Subject: [CPS School Committee Group Email] Message about Israeli-Gaza Conflict

To Dr. Greer and the School Committee Members,

My name is [REDACTED] and I am Math Coach at Graham and Parks. I have spent a great deal of my career learning about the Israel-Palestine conflict and this summer I visited both the West Bank and many parts of Israel as well. As a Muslim, the Palestinian plight has also been a huge part of my upbringing, especially having close friends who are Palestinian refugees whose families have been uprooted. I am writing to express my disappointment regarding Dr. Greer's most recent statement concerning the violence between Israel and Gaza. This statement, while intended to address the recent situation, has presented a one-sided perspective showing solidarity and concerns only for "Israeli civilians" with no acknowledgement of ongoing suffering and death of Palestinians. The bias in this statement is harmful to the numerous students, faculty, and staff in our district who identify as Muslim, Palestinian, and/or Arab.

I want to take this as an opportunity to not only discuss this unfair perspective but to educate leadership. What is happening in Palestine and Israel is not a conflict, or religious clash, but rather settler colonialism and an occupation by the Israeli state. Most of the international world with the exclusion of the U.S has condemned Israel for illegal occupation of Palestinian land. It started in 1917 with the Balfour Declaration when the British government post WWI announced its support for a national home of the Jewish people, and offered Palestinian land which was not theirs to give. They then facilitated the migration of Jews to this land where native Palestinians made up more than 90% of population. They were uprooted and then started the 100 years of displacement and ethnic cleansing of Palestinian people. In 1948, what is known to Palestinians as "The Catastrophe," was when Zionist armed groups who were trained by the British, forcibly expelled more than 750,000 Palestinians from their land, destroyed over 500 Palestinian towns, and killed 15,000 Palestinians.

Over the past 75 years, the Palestinian people have experienced immense suffering, displacement, and a 15 year long inhumane siege and blockade in Gaza which has been described as the "longest open-air prison" by human rights organizations. The blockade which has been ruthlessly imposed by Israel by land, sea and air has effectively deprived Palestinian residents of freedom of movement and destroyed Gaza's economy. It has severely restricted access to basic human needs like food, clean water, electricity, and medicine. Israel's war crimes against Palestinians of all faiths have been well documented by Human Rights Watch, Amnesty International, B'Tselem, and others have unequivocally declared Israel an apartheid state.

The death toll of the conflict in Palestine-Israel is disproportionately borne by Palestinians. Between 2008 and 2021, at least 5,739 Palestinians and 251 Israelis were killed. According to the UN, the conflict has taken the lives of 23 Palestinians for each Israeli.

This letter is not asking you to ignore the suffering of the Israelis and in no way condones violence perpetrated on civilians. It does however challenge your recent communication to only acknowledge the loss of Israeli civilians.

I am calling on you to maintain a balanced view that ensures a welcoming and safe environment for all. I am further calling on you to release a statement acknowledging the pain and suffering of the Palestinian civilians, especially the more than 1 million Palestinians in occupied Gaza who are being told to evacuate from a place they can't escape. There is no airport in Gaza. There are no borders open welcoming Palestinian refugees. This is literal genocide.

Sincerely,

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[REDACTED] (pronouns: she/her)
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