



Association for
**Iranian
Studies**

AIS Council Statement on the Israeli Escalation of the War in Gaza and the West Bank

October 22, 2023

Dear colleagues,

The Association for Iranian Studies writes again out of grave concern for the lives and rights of Palestinians and other civilians who have been subjected to relentless Israeli bombardments and military operations since the current conflict began over two weeks ago, and calls for an immediate ceasefire. According to recent reports from the [United Nations](#), over 4,000 Palestinians have been killed, nearly half of them children. More than a thousand Palestinians are lost under the rubble, and over a million have been displaced since Israel declared “a complete siege” on Gaza. The apparent escalation of the war, as seen in recent Israeli attacks on the West Bank, in addition to its punishing onslaught on Gaza, demonstrate the increasingly brutal and inhumane tactics of the Israeli military – actions we unequivocally condemn. We mourn the destruction of these lives, while we continue to mourn the 1400 Israeli deaths since the heinous Hamas attacks on 7 October 2023.

We emphatically denounce the prolongment of the cruel war in Gaza, the vicious attack on al-Ahli hospital (regardless of culpability), the horrendous bombing of the 12th-century Saint Porphyrius Greek Orthodox Church in Gaza where people were seeking refuge, the bombings of refugee camps, and the denial of basic survival necessities to Palestinian citizens. We are appalled by the callous and abhorrent way in which Israeli authorities have deprived Gazans of food, water, electricity, fuel, and healthcare. According to the [United Nations Office on Genocide Prevention and the Responsibility to Protect](#), deliberate starvation and dehydration are war crimes, as is forced relocation, and they must stop immediately. Taking civilian hostages is also a war crime, and we urge Hamas to return the approximately 200 Israelis that it still holds captive.

UN agencies are warning that the current Israeli bombing campaign of Gaza; the unrealistic evacuation order; and the denial of basic human necessities increasingly run “a risk of [genocide](#) against the Palestinian People.” These conditions are occurring in the context of Israel’s longstanding occupation of Palestinian lands after 1967. This conflict has rendered approximately six million Palestinian refugees over the last decades and has gone on for too

long, costing many lives. The historical and root causes of the dispute may be difficult to parse, but they certainly include the subjugation of Palestinians to settler colonialism, occupation, dispossession, and racism. The Association for Iranian Studies leaves no doubt that it categorically condemns all practices of systemic discrimination, racism, and apartheid.

We reject further the intimidation or dehumanization of individuals engaged in peaceful protests regarding this conflict. Many supporters of Palestinians on American university campuses are facing threats, including death threats, for their political positions and for participating in pro-Palestinian rallies. We find unacceptable the intentional silencing or doxxing of those who speak out against the slaughter of Palestinians and their forced relocation. We also request that university students who sympathize with Israel be similarly protected from acts of hate. We oppose all forms of hate speech, be they Islamophobic, Orientalist, or anti-Semitic language, and strive to counter them. We call on campus leaders and administrators throughout the country to protect the principles of freedom of speech and assembly, which remain vital to university life, especially during wartime.

The loathsome stabbing and murder of the 6-year-old Palestinian boy, Wadea Al-Fayoume, in Chicago brings home just how deeply the rhetoric of hate propounded by bigoted leaders and individuals, and amplified by certain media outlets, ingrains itself in the minds of people and spurs violence even here in the United States. We demand that our politicians and media practitioners act according to humane and humanitarian values that treat all life as equally valuable.

Finally, we reproach our political leaders, who are standing by and witnessing the killing of innocent Palestinian civilians in Gaza without calling for a ceasefire. We oppose the US delegation's veto against a United Nations Security Council motion led by Brazil on 19 October that called for a ceasefire. Along with millions of people in the US and around the world, we join the heroic Jewish Voice for Peace activists who occupied the Capitol Rotunda in Washington, D.C., on 19 October, to call for a ceasefire. We vehemently oppose the further infusion of money and arms to be used to prolong this war. We remain heartbroken at the loss of so many precious lives in Gaza, the West Bank, and Israel and urge international cooperation in bringing an end to this critical conflict.