

DRAFT 5/27/24

## Solidarity with Palestinians

### UUA General Assembly 2024 Proposed Action of Immediate Witness

**Primary Proposer: Rev. DL Helfer of Westminster Unitarian Church**

**Additional Proposers: Lena Gardner, Rev. Katie Romano Griffin, and Rev. Abhi Janamanchi**

Our Unitarian Universalist faith draws on the moral imperative of radical love, and despite all odds, calls us to uphold a world where liberation is real and we all thrive.

Our faith community has long recognized the horrors of violent antisemitism against generations of Jewish people, and we reaffirm our commitment to their safety. Our support for Jewish well-being was never meant to undermine the rights and lands of Palestinian people. We seek a world where our Palestinian and Jewish kin are safe.

We decry Palestinians' actions of October 7 and also Israel's brutal response to those actions. We further acknowledge that we cannot possibly contextualize all that led to this point but note that Israel's occupation and repression of Gaza has been decades long.

Unitarian and/or Universalist congregations and communities around the world have issued calls for peace, justice, and reparations in the Palestinian territories for decades. In 1948, 750,000 Palestinians were forcibly displaced, and at least 280,000 were displaced in 1967 when additional Palestinian lands were violently occupied against international law. UUA General Assembly resolutions in 1982 and 2002 called for ending the occupation of Palestinian lands and a 1982 UUA Board of Trustees resolution declared that "criticism of the policies of the government of Israel should not be equated with or confused with anti-Semitism."

A growing number of Unitarian Universalist communities and individuals are calling for ending unconditional military aid to the State of Israel and affirming solidarity with Palestinian safety, support, and self-determination, including Black Lives of UU, Diverse Revolutionary Unitarian Universalist Multicultural Ministries, Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, UU College of Social Justice, Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East, Unitarian Universalist Association senior leadership, and thousands of UU religious professionals, lay leaders, and congregants. With the U.S. providing Israel the highest amount of military aid in the world, UUs in this country bear a responsibility to speak out against these policies.

In recent years, major human rights organizations published reports documenting the apartheid policies and practices of the State of Israel.

Since October 7th, Israel has subjected Gaza to indiscriminate bombings with US-made weapons, resulting in civilian casualties, including journalists, aid workers delivering food and medical supplies, and healthcare workers. As of May 25, 2024, over 40,000 have been killed, including over 8,000 children, counting identified Palestinians and bodies under rubble, 20,000 orphaned, and nearly 80,000 wounded, including thousands of amputees. Israel has blocked necessary aid delivery, depriving Palestinians of food, water, and medicines and causing famine with starvation deaths in the hundreds and 1.6 million in danger. The targeted and widespread destruction of medical, cultural, agricultural, educational, and religious sites constitutes ethnic cleansing.

The Israeli military's deliberate targeting of Gaza's hospitals and healthcare infrastructure, along with the killing of health workers and the withholding of food and water, is causing a humanitarian crisis that threatens the

survival and well-being of the Palestinian population. The International Court of Justice has labeled these actions as plausible genocide and has urged countries that are parties to the Genocide Convention to halt any actions that could contribute to this grave situation.

2

The persecution of the Palestinians is also connected to a global commitment to profits over human lives and parallels greed-fueled conflicts in Sudan, Democratic Republic of the Congo, and Ethiopia. While we call for the liberation of Palestinians, we also call for the liberation for all persecuted people across the globe. At the core of our Unitarian Universalist faith is the belief that life is sacred. Amidst global efforts to tamp down on speaking up for the lives of Palestinians, Congolese, and all oppressed people, we must find our courage to live and speak our beliefs into the broken, breaking world.

Solidarity with Palestinians faces escalating repression in the United States. Thousands of students are staging peaceful protests against the massacres, with universities enabling police forces to conduct hundreds of arrests. These demonstrations are also met with attacks on free speech, providing a pretext for both state and paramilitary violence. A bill declaring criticism of Israel to be antisemitic, based on a controversial definition, has been approved by the House, and the Senate is expected to affirm it as well.

Over 325 groups have signed the Apartheid-Free Communities solidarity initiative of the American Friends Service Committee, including four major denominations: Alliance of Baptists, Disciples of Christ, the South Central Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends, and the United Church Of Christ. Unitarian Universalist signatories include Black Lives of Unitarian Universalism, The Unitarian Universalist College of Social Justice, the Unitarian Universalist Service Committee, and Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East. Now is the time for the General Assembly of the Unitarian Universalist Association of Congregations to declare support for this movement.

**Resolved:** We, the delegates of the 2024 General Assembly, call on our UU communities to be in solidarity with Palestinians by engaging in the following actions based on the guidance of Palestinian and impacted partner organizations:

1. Witnessing

- Call for the liberation of Palestine and an end to the apartheid; declare our moral outrage and shared horror at Israel's massacre, mass incarceration, torture, destruction of the land poisoning soil for future generations, and decimation of systems of care for healthy reproduction.
- Call for an exchange of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners.

2. Educating:

- Hold teach-ins about Palestine and Israel that include sacred spaces for spiritual processing.

3. Organizing and Advocating:

- Encourage the UUA and UU congregations and organizations to sign, amplify, and carry out the Apartheid-Free Communities Pledge.
- Support boycott, divestment, and sanctions against Israel and corporate enablers until it ends its policies and practices of apartheid, military occupation, settler colonialism, and genocide. • Protect the freedom and safety of solidarity activists by supporting protests and opposing legislation and policy that restrict First Amendment rights.

References, Resources, and Endorsements