

Open Letter on Recent Events in Israel and Gaza to the UC-Berkeley Community

We are Berkeley faculty who are deeply concerned about recent and ongoing events in the Middle East, and about their direct impact upon the safety of our community of students, staff and faculty on campus.

On the morning of October 7, Hamas terrorists launched a brutal and vicious attack, entering Israel from Gaza. In villages and towns near the Israel/Gaza border, they murdered by gun, knife, and fire more than 1,000 unarmed civilians, including babies, children, women, the elderly, and entire families, in their homes and on the street.

They went door-to-door annihilating whole families. They killed children in front of their parents and siblings. They abused women, and paraded their mistreated naked bodies. They massacred hundreds of young people attending a nature party in the desert. And they took captive over 150 children, infants, elderly in wheelchairs, women and men, to be used as human shields, and worse.

The murdered and kidnapped include citizens of Israel, the United States, Brazil, Argentina, Nepal, Thailand, the Philippines, China and Germany. We hope no more countries will be added as lists of those who died and were kidnapped are continually updated.

We fear for the lives of the hostages, and in particular for the women. We all know sexual assault and violence against women in civil society is out of proportion. We shudder to think of what is happening now to the women hostages. We call for their immediate release.

While we individually have many different views about the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, we emphatically agree with President Biden's characterization of this murderous attack - the purposeful annihilation, rape, kidnapping, and execution of civilians - as a violation of every code of human morality.

Some in our campus community have described these massacres perpetrated by Hamas as "resistance" to be "celebrated" in a "freedom struggle." This is repugnant and indefensible. For many of us, as we went on social media on Sunday night and Monday morning, it was shocking to realize that literally while Hamas terrorists were going house-to-house seeking to murder as many Jews as they could, some pro-Palestinian organizations on our own campus were gathering petition signatures for statements that celebrated these Hamas terrorists as freedom fighters and rejected any critique of their actions.

We condemn this violence for what it is, and we extend our deepest sympathies to Israelis and to Jews worldwide in this hour of terror and brutal devastation. It is possible to do this and simultaneously evince deep sympathy and concern for the people of Gaza as they face a major military onslaught whose impact will indeed be brutal. It is possible simultaneously to condemn unequivocally what occurred this weekend for the barbarism it was and to advocate for justice for Palestinians. We mourn all loss of life and security in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and we pray for a swift resolution to the current violence and the return of the hostages.

We recognize of course that UC-Berkeley has students and community members from all regions, including from the Gaza Strip. We cherish our diversity and respect our Palestinian colleagues, students, and neighbors. We pray for the safety of all our community members and their families.

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