

## UC Riverside Faculty For Justice in Palestine (FJP) Statement on the Ongoing Occupation of and War on Gaza

October 11, 2023

Faculty for Justice in Palestine (UCR) continue to watch with concern the escalation of violence in Palestine/Israel and to lament the fate of civilians on both sides.

We are especially concerned now for the fate of the residents of Gaza, who have already suffered nearly two decades under Israel's draconian blockade that has transformed the densely populated area into an open-air prison for 2.4 million Palestinians. In the course of their retaliatory onslaught, Israel has now tightened that blockade, depriving Palestinian civilians of water, electricity and food. "We are putting a complete siege on Gaza," Israeli Minister [Yoav Gallant](#) stated. "No electricity, no food, no water, no gas—it's all closed." As that onslaught intensifies, Palestinian homes, schools, universities and hospitals are once again undergoing total destruction, over 263,000 Gazan residents have already been displaced with no safe place to take refuge, and whole families, including small children, have been killed by Israeli bombardment. Israel has [bombed the Rafah crossing](#), the sole point of exit from Gaza over land not controlled by Israel, disrupting the flow of aid to the besieged Palestinians there, even as the US is supplying [additional military hardware to Israel](#). This most recent siege and attacks is the fourth such campaign in 15 years, perpetrated by one of the world's most powerful militaries against a vulnerable population, the majority of whom are refugees from successive waves of displacement by Israeli settlement and ethnic cleansing since 1948.

While media world-wide are full of condemnations by politicians and others of this weekend's Hamas-led incursion into Israel, it is important that we acknowledge the full historical context of this current phase in a long record of violence, displacement, and colonial domination of Palestine. As UN Special Rapporteur on the Occupied Palestinian Territories [Francesca Albanese](#) has stated, the current situation is "the result of decades of oppression imposed on the Palestinians, brutalization, structural violence of course punctuated also by eruptive violence." The past year alone has seen repeated incursions by Israeli military into towns and villages on the West Bank as well as Gaza, leading to some [200 Palestinian deaths](#) already by July, including tens of children. The Israeli military has regularly protected extremist settler gunmen, who have burned Palestinian homes, murdered Palestinians, destroyed their crops, and terrorized families into leaving their homes and farms. Although 2023 has proven to be the deadliest year on the West Bank so far, Israel's campaigns against Gaza in 2008-9, 2012, and 2014 have taken a toll of thousands, which is likely to be exceeded in the present war.

Although it may have been exacerbated by the rise to power of the most extreme right-wing coalition in Israel's history, the ongoing violence and terror inflicted by the Israeli state has to be seen in the context of Israel's settler-colonial and apartheid regime, the latter of which has been documented in exhaustive detail by the world's most respected human rights organizations, [Amnesty International](#) and [Human Rights Watch](#), as well as by the [United Nations](#) and by Israel's most established human rights organization [B'Tselem](#). The dispossession, displacement and repression of Palestinians across historic Palestine, including Israel itself, have been the policy of every Israeli government since 1948. Israel-based legal rights organization, [Adalah](#), documents over 65 laws that discriminate against Palestinians

within Israel. The military occupation of the West Bank has led to [two distinct legal regimes](#) that systematically privilege the rights of Israeli settlers while denying the most basic rights of housing, freedom of movement, and security to Palestinians. In occupied East Jerusalem, Palestinians are daily evicted from their homes to make room for settlers and are under constant threat of losing residency rights. Palestinians are subject to arbitrary arrest and indefinite detention without charges: two in every five Palestinian men have been arrested, and among the thousands of Palestinians in Israeli prisons are at least [170 children](#), many of whom have been subjected to [intense interrogation](#) and even torture.

This context of extreme and daily violence to which Palestinians are subjected by Israel's racial state has to be taken into account in any response to Hamas's October incursion or Israel's horrific vengeance for it, [which violates international law on multiple counts](#). As the *New York Times* reported on October 10, "[Israeli airstrikes](#) flattened mosques over the heads of worshippers. At least two hospitals, and two centers run by the Palestine Red Crescent, have been hit. So have two schools run by the U.N. agency that helps Palestinian refugees." This is in line with a pattern of violence targeting [civilians](#), [hospitals](#), [schools](#), and [entire neighborhoods](#) over decades, in sync with the structural, racial, settler, and juridical violence of the state of Israel. Without an acknowledgment of this context, condemnations of specific acts of violence perpetrated by Palestinian armed resistance merely amounts to a hypocritical disavowal of the roots of violence under the mask of humanitarian concern. This is particularly the case for successive US administrations and their Congressional backers who have for decades given both material support and political cover to Israel's apartheid regime and are therefore complicit in its every individual act of violence and in the total system of injustice that US aid enables. "The United States has given Israel more than [\\$260 billion in combined military and economic aid](#) since WW II," as reported in *U.S. News and World Report*. Given this backdrop of US aid, it is therefore particularly incumbent on US citizens who wish to condemn any instance of violence in Palestine to oppose US complicity in Israel's apartheid and its expansionist project of dispossession and ethnic cleansing. Without that commitment, the repudiation of violence amounts to the blaming of the victims of apartheid.

It is a fact that international law and [UN Resolutions](#) guarantee "the legitimacy of the struggle of peoples for independence, territorial integrity, national unity and liberation from colonial domination, apartheid and foreign occupation by all available means, including armed struggle." Resistance is not terrorism, though we may and do repudiate specific terrorist acts, whether perpetrated by state actors or paramilitary organizations. But if we repudiate violence, we are then bound to engage in an active practice of non-violent activism and organizing to seek to transform the conditions that sustain and reproduce militarism and violence. In the case of Palestine, that action has been for twenty years clear and effective. Palestinian civil society has unanimously called for a campaign to impose [Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions](#) on Israel until it acknowledges the full legal, political and civil rights of Palestinian people and dismantles the apartheid regime. In the United States that campaign has already had a major effect in transforming public opinion. But only a redoubling of BDS efforts in solidarity with the Palestinian struggle for liberation from settler colonial domination can make the complicity of the US state, without which Israel could not maintain its discriminatory regime, politically unacceptable. Faculty for Justice in Palestine urge all those concerned to further the emancipation of Palestinians from apartheid and colonial domination to redouble efforts to promote BDS on campus and in professional associations and civil society organizations everywhere.

Faculty for Justice in Palestine further share our outrage that Zionist advocacy organizations have subjected and continue to subject Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim undergraduate and graduate students to bullying, harassment, and suppression of their right to free speech. What the Center for Constitutional Rights and Palestine Legal have termed “[the Palestine exception](#),” where all forms of public advocacy, self-representation, and freedom of speech are permitted except in the case of Palestine, is operationalized against students. Such closures on critical social thought and public discourse are antithetical to the mission of the university and obscure the ongoing role of Zionism as a settler-colonial ideology and practice in Palestine. We therefore insist that the University of California, Riverside refuse to participate in these closures upon thought and collective intellectual life and affirm the right to freedom of speech of UC, Riverside students who speak out in advocacy of Palestine and Palestinians.