

Katherine Douglas

General Public Comment - Anderson



From: Elena Anderson <anderson.elena20@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, December 5, 2023 9:37 AM
To: Supervisor Das Williams; Laura Capps; Joan Hartmann; Supervisor Nelson; Steve Lavagnino; sbcob
Subject: Resolution in Support of the State of Israel

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Good Morning Supervisors,

Unfortunately, I was unsuccessful in joining your meeting virtually today. As an aside, I wonder if moving public comment before administrative items could help to increase public participation?

First, I want to express my gratitude for your ongoing commitment to serving our County and express my appreciation for the time and consideration that most of you have given to my previous correspondence.

As you may know, tragically the death toll since that time has doubled. I'm increasingly cognizant of the harm caused within our community by the resolution your board unanimously passed. The omission of Palestine, by its nature, erases the entire group of people. I believe there exists an opportunity to initiate the healing process.

Inspired by the actions taken by cities such as Oakland, Richmond, and Seattle, I urge you to consider adopting a resolution that calls for an immediate and permanent cease-fire. Such a measure garners significant support from our community members -- 2/3 of the American public wants this.

Additionally, it's important to acknowledge the difficulty in openly discussing this issue. Numerous individuals I'm acquainted with hold strong sentiments regarding this matter but feel apprehensive about voicing their opinions due to concerns about job security. For each person who has reached out through in-person discussions, phone calls, emails, or any other means, there are many, many more who share similar thoughts but are hesitant to express them openly.

Understanding this hesitancy is crucial in gauging the collective sentiment of your constituents. It's indicative that the viewpoints expressed so far represent only a small fraction of the community's feelings and experiences.

Thank you for your time and consideration.
Elena Anderson

On Sat, Nov 11, 2023 at 9:59 AM Elena Anderson <anderson.elena20@gmail.com> wrote:
Dear Santa Barbara County Board of Supervisors,

First, I want to express my sincere appreciation for your commitment to our community. I see each of you working hard for so many of the causes that matter deeply to me, thank you. Today, I'm writing regarding the unanimous resolution passed in support of "Israel's Right to Security, Peace, and Commitment to Combating Anti-Semitism and Islamophobia."

Regrettably, statements like these deepen divisions and further alienate community members who need the most support. The resolution cites unity between members of the Jewish and Muslim faiths during times of adversity when they "shared meals, marched, and rallied together." I've witnessed this in the past, however, this does not accurately reflect the current situation. At a time when understanding and empathy are crucial, one-sided statements make it

even more challenging to build a rapport and trust between our Jewish and Islamic communities.

While we all condemn the horrific attacks by Hamas on 10/7, we must also acknowledge the losses suffered by Palestinians before and after 10/7. Rather than pit marginalized groups against one another, we can all advocate for a solution that honors the human rights of both Palestinians and Israelis equally, a sentiment shared by nearly half of all Israelis supporting a two-state solution. As you know, the Palestinian-Israeli conflict is complex and deeply rooted in history. More understanding of the intricacies and the suffering over the last 75 years, marked by occupation and apartheid, could foster more empathy.

Over the past two decades, Palestinians have accounted for nearly 96% of deaths in the Israel-Palestinian conflict. In the last month alone, over 10,000 Palestinians have lost their lives in Israeli airstrikes, with nearly half being children. In contrast, the Israeli death toll stands at approximately 1,400.

The resolution notes the (240) Israelis taken hostage by Hamas but neglects to address the over 2,200 Palestinians detained by Israel. These statistics highlight the complexity of the situation; taking sides further alienates a part of our community that already feels invisible to the people who represent them.

To make a positive impact, I encourage you to engage with our local Islamic Society or mosque to gain insights into their perspectives and experiences, mirroring the approach taken with our local Jewish community members and faith leaders. My hope is that our elected representatives exemplify the principles of relationship-building, deepening knowledge, acknowledging the issue's complexity, and being honest about areas of uncertainty.

Our local college campuses also possess a wealth of knowledge, and while divisions among students are high, academics from both sides of the issue would likely engage with elected officials, facilitating a deeper understanding of the ongoing humanitarian crisis. Neutral campus leaders like Katya Armistad, the Assistant Vice Chancellor and Dean of Student Life, could help facilitate introductions. Elected officials, undoubtedly, also have contacts at their disposal.

If not done already, I recommend reading the recent article published by former President Barack Obama's for valuable insights on the complexity of the conflict. Additionally, Jewish Voice for Peace is a local resource offering collaborative perspectives on the matter. Engaging with interfaith leaders like Rev. Julia Hamilton and Rev. Dr. David Moore, along with Rabbis actively involved in the interfaith initiative, could also provide valuable connections with our Islamic community members.

During times like these, the absence of Imam Yama Niazi is deeply felt. His departure, driven by the high cost of living, represents a loss for our interfaith community. Yama, born and raised in Goleta, and his wife Aida, significantly contributed to our interfaith community, demonstrating unwavering support for causes that matter to us all.

I would like to know what our supervisors offices are doing to nurture a partnership with our Islamic community and how they're working to understand the perspective of people who support the rights of Palestinians. As we know, "social change happens at the speed of relationships," and we can model that here. Santa Barbara County has a history of collaboration and success where other communities have failed. We can do better.

I appreciate your time, your tireless work, and your willingness to listen.

Sincerely,
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