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2023-02-29

Delegate Anne Healey, Chair  
Delegate Marvin E. Holmes, Jr., Vice Chair  
Rules and Executive Nominations Committee  
H-4 State House  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for HJ0002 Long-Term Ceasefire in Israel and Palestine

Dear Chair Healey and Vice Chair Holmes:

Our hearts ache at news of the October 7, 2023, attack on Israel by Hamas, and at news of the five subsequent months of attacks on Gaza by Israel. Too many innocent people have died on both sides, and continue to suffer from the hostage taking and less-than-fatal injuries on both sides.

The U.S. government's military and diplomatic support of Israel makes us complicit in Israel's gross overreaction to the unlawful and violent attack by Hamas. Through indiscriminate bombing and other lethal attacks, Israel has used American and other weapons to kill over 30,000 Palestinians. Our national government gives Israel \$4 billion every year, mostly for military support. This is more aid than our country gives to any other country in the world. Since 1946, our aid to Israel has totaled over \$290 billion – more than double the amount we gave to South Vietnam. See <https://www.cfr.org/article/us-aid-israel-four-charts> (“nearly all U.S. aid today goes to support Israel's military”). Israel uses this money to buy U.S. armaments and services. This is about 15% of Israel's military budget.

Under the Leahy Law, 10 U.S.Code § 2249e, the U.S. is prohibited from giving military aid to countries that commit gross human rights violations. However, the U.S. government is not applying this law to its aid for Israel. Instead, our national government has stated that Israel would receive “whatever it needs” to support a counteroffensive against Hamas in Gaza.

[https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United\\_States\\_support\\_for\\_Israel\\_in\\_the\\_Israel%E2%80%93Hamas\\_war](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/United_States_support_for_Israel_in_the_Israel%E2%80%93Hamas_war)  
The Center for Constitutional Rights (CCR) is currently suing the federal government “for their failure to prevent Israel's unfolding genocide, as well as for their complicity, by encouraging it and materially supporting it.” *Id.*

But for the U.S. veto, the United Nations Security Council would have required the parties to cease fire immediately. The International Court of Justice ordered Israel to take “immediate and effective measures” to protect Palestinians in Gaza. Amnesty International reports that, “Israel has failed to take even the bare minimum steps to comply.” <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2024/02/israel-defying-icj-ruling-to-prevent-genocide-by-failing-to-allow-adequate-humanitarian-aid-to-reach-gaza/>

The Genocide Convention requires State Parties to take measures to prevent and to punish the crime of genocide, “whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals”

(Article IV). <https://www.un.org/en/genocideprevention/genocide-convention.shtml>

While Americans might disagree on many topics nowadays, hopefully we can agree that the United States is against genocide, no matter who commits it. Not only are we obligated to desist from supporting perpetrators of genocide, we are required to call them out and assure they are punished for and prevented from carrying out genocide.

HJ002 calls for a first and immediate step: a long-term ceasefire. We urge your Committee, the House of Delegates and our State as a whole to support HJ002.

Thank you for your attention to this matter.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Richard R. Renner". The script is fluid and cursive.

Richard R. Renner

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Laura Yeomans". The script is fluid and cursive.

Laura Yeomans