Claremont Consortium Faculty Statement on Gaza

October 31, 2023

As faculty at the Claremont Colleges, we continue to watch with concern the escalation of violence in Palestine and Israel; to mourn, without reservation, all loss of human life in Gaza, in Israel, and across the occupied Palestinian territory; and to lament the suffering of civilians throughout the region, whose targeting is prohibited by international law.

At this time, we are especially concerned for the welfare of residents of Gaza, who have already suffered for nearly two decades under Israel's blockade that has trapped over 2 million Palestinians in an enclosed, densely populated area. In retaliation for the Hamas attack on civilians and military targets on October 7, Israel has tightened that blockade, depriving Palestinian civilians of water, electricity, and food. "We are putting a complete siege on Gaza," Israeli Defense Minister Yoav Gallant stated on October 9. "No electricity, no food, no water, no fuel. Everything is closed. We are fighting human animals, and we will act accordingly." This dehumanizing language is characteristic of ethnic cleansing and genocide. Recently circulated Israeli think tank and intelligence ministry documents lay out plans for the ethnic cleansing of Gaza in preparation for Israeli settlement.

The Israeli bombardment since October 7 has, as of October 30, killed over 8300 Palestinians in Gaza including entire families and children, and has destroyed or damaged Palestinian homes, schools, universities, mosques, churches, and hospitals. This onslaught has displaced over one million Gazan residents, who have no safe place to take refuge. Israel has bombed the Rafah crossing, the sole land-entrypoint into Gaza not controlled by Israel, disrupting the flow of aid to besieged Palestinians, even as the US is supplying additional military hardware to Israel. This most recent siege and bombardment is the fourth such campaign in 15 years, attacks that have killed thousands of Palestinians, perpetrated by one of the world's most powerful and nuclear-armed militaries against a vulnerable civilian population, the majority of whom are refugees from successive waves of displacement by Israeli settlement and ethnic cleansing since 1948.

This is a new and alarming phase in the 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 roots of this new phase lie in a well-documented 75+ year history of Israeli settler-colonialism, military occupation and apartheid.

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 must be understood in the context of this settler-colonialism and Israel's apartheid regime, 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 one of Israel's most established human rights organizations, B'Tselem. The past year alone has seen repeated incursions by Israeli military into towns and villages on the West Bank and attacks by extremist settler gunmen, who have burned Palestinian homes, murdered Palestinians, destroyed their crops, and terrorized families into leaving their homes and farms. However, the dispossession, displacement, and repression of Palestinians across historic Palestine has 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 in illegal settlements 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.

These conditions, as enumerated by multiple human rights organizations, violate 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 Israel's pattern of targeting civilians, hospitals, schools, places of worship, and entire neighborhoods over decades. Without an acknowledgment of this context, condemnations only of specific acts of violence perpetrated by Palestinian armed groups can serve to disavow the roots of violence under a seemingly neutral mask of humanitarian concern. This is particularly the case for successive US administrations and their Congressional backers who have for decades provided 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. In fact, "The United States has given Israel more than $260 billion in combined military and economic aid since World War II." Alarmingly, the US is currently bolstering its military presence in the region. Given this backdrop of one-sided US aid, we urge US citizens who wish to condemn any instance of violence in Israel/Palestine to recognize US complicity in Israel's apartheid regime and its expansionist project of dispossession and ethnic cleansing. Without that commitment, the repudiation of one form of violence and endorsement of another is hypocritical.

If we repudiate violence, we are then bound to engage in an active practice of non-violent activism and organizing to transform the conditions that sustain and reproduce militarism and violence. In the case of Palestine, that action has been clear and effective. Palestinian civil society has unanimously called for a campaign to impose Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) on Israel until it 1) ends its siege of Gaza and its occupation and colonization of all Arab

lands and dismantles the Wall; 2) recognizes the fundamental rights of Palestinians in Israel to full equality; and 3) implements the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN Resolution 194. In the US, 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 politically unacceptable. Along with student groups already working on the cause of justice for Palestinians, we urge all those concerned at the Claremont Colleges and beyond 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.

We further share our outrage that Zionist advocacy organizations have subjected and continue to subject Palestinian, Arab, and Muslim students and faculty, students of all backgrounds who advocate for Palestinian rights, and faculty of all backgrounds who teach on Palestine and Israel to bullying, harassment, and suppression of their right to free speech. The Center for Constitutional Rights and Palestine Legal have termed this suppression "the Palestine exception," where all forms of public advocacy, self-representation, and freedom of speech are permitted except in the case of Palestine. In addition to violating constitutional free speech rights, such closures on critical social thought and public discourse violate academic freedom, are antithetical to the missions of our Colleges, disrupt our capacity to fulfill our professional, scholarly, and pedagogical responsibilities, and stifle our students' efforts to engage in public political action. We reject all forms of discrimination, including Islamophobia, anti-Muslim racism, anti-Arab racism, and anti-Semitism -- which should not be conflated with critiques of Israel or Zionism. As reaffirmed in a recent statement by the Claremont Colleges AAUP Chapter Executive Committee, we therefore insist that each of the Claremont Colleges uphold academic freedom and the right to freedom of speech for all community members.

We stand in solidarity with Palestinians in Gaza and with our colleagues in occupied Palestine. We invite our colleagues and students to learn about Palestinian history and to recognize their full humanity. We ask our administrations to reaffirm their commitment to academic freedom and freedom of expression without threat of censure or retaliation. We call upon our colleagues in Claremont to join us in this solidarity, by contacting Congressional representatives to demand a ceasefire, supporting BDS efforts, and upholding academic freedom and free speech protections for all community members. For additional actions you can take, see the websites of the U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights and Jewish Voice for Peace.

Claremont Consortium faculty who want to sign this statement should email claremontfjp@gmail.com. Pre-tenure, contingent, and visiting faculty as well as faculty whose administrative positions preclude them from signing such statements may sign anonymously by emailing that address.

Claremont Consortium Faculty Signatures

Andrea Acosta, Pitzer College
Andrew Aisenberg, Scripps College
Anna Ahn, Harvey Mudd College
Fazia Aitel, Claremont McKenna College
Rita Cano Alcalá, Scripps College
Amsale Alemu, Scripps College
Ahmed Alwishah, Pitzer College
Shaila Andrabi, Pomona College
Bill Anthes, Pitzer College
Brent Armendinger, Pitzer College
Claudia Arteaga, Scripps College
Guadalupe Bacio, Pomona College
Gabriela Bacsan, Scripps College
Aimee Bahng, Pomona College
Mita Banerjee, Pitzer College
Lucas Bang, Harvey Mudd College
Sumangala Bhattacharya, Pitzer College
Ralph Bolton, Professor Emeritus, Pomona College
Nigel Boyle, Pitzer College
Suchi Branfman, Scripps College
Michael Brown, Keck Science
Kim Bruce, Professor Emeritus, Pomona College
Jose Zapata Calderon, Professor Emeritus, Pitzer College
Lucia Cantero, Claremont Graduate University
Deborah Carter, Claremont Graduate University
Alfonso Castro, Harvey Mudd College
Piya Chatterjee, Scripps College
Alessia Cecchet, Pitzer College
Tamara Cedré, Pitzer College
Jih-Fei Cheng, Scripps College
Wendy Cheng, Scripps College
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Pey-Yi Chu, Pomona College
Ambereen Dadabhoy, Harvey Mudd College
Adam Davis, Scripps College
Lara Deeb, Scripps College
Deshonay Dozier, Claremont Graduate University
Kim Drake, Scripps College
Erika Dyson, Harvey Mudd College
Shawki El-Zatmah, Claremont McKenna
Ann Esin, Harvey Mudd College
Kouross Esmaeli, Pomona College
Halford H. Fairchild, Professor Emeritus, Pitzer College
Paul Faulstich, Professor Emeritus, Pitzer College
Jennifer Feitosa, Claremont McKenna College

Heather Ferguson, Claremont McKenna College
Elise Ferree, Scripps and Pitzer Colleges
Cindy Forster, Scripps College
Carmen Fought, Pitzer College
Bassam Frangieh, Claremont McKenna College
Anup Gampa, Harvey Mudd College
Lily Geismer, Claremont McKenna College
Sarah Gilbert, Pitzer College
Mar Golub, Scripps College
Ken Gonzales-Day, Scripps College
Martha Gonzalez, Scripps College
George Gorse, Pomona College
Sharon Goto, Pomona College
Paula Gutiérrez, Pitzer College
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Dre Helms, Harvey Mudd College
Esther Hernández-Medina, Pomona College
Todd Honma, Pitzer College
Gabriel Hope, Harvey Mudd College
Emiliano Huet-Vaughn, Pomona College
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Wei-Chin Hwang, Claremont McKenna College
Phyllis J. Jackson, Pomona College
Barbara Junisbai, Pitzer College
Jananie Kalyanaraman, Scripps College
Ann Kaneko, Scripps College
Hazel Katz (Scripps College)
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Thomas Kim, Scripps College
Jordan Kirk, Pomona College
Arash Khazeni, Pomona College
Juliet Koss, Scripps College
Sarp Kurgan, Pitzer, College
Amanda Lagji, Pitzer College
Gina Lamb, Pitzer College
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Jesse Lerner, Pitzer College
Richard Lewis, Pomona College
Alexandra Lippman, Pomona College
Julia E. Liss, Professor Emerita, Scripps College
Jemma Lorenat, Pitzer College
Joyce Lu, Pomona College
David Luis-Brown, Claremont Graduate University
Theresa Lynn, Harvey Mudd College

Leila Mansouri, Scripps College
Daniel E. Martinez, Pomona College
Rachel Mayeri, Harvey Mudd College
Wendy Menefee-Libey, Harvey Mudd College
Jessie Mills, Pomona College
Gabriela Morales, Scripps College
Jim Morrison, Claremont McKenna College
M. Bilal Nasir, Pomona College
Nancy Neiman, Scripps College
Joanne Nucho, Pomona College
Gilda Ochoa, Pomona College
Eve Oishi, Claremont Graduate University
Dan O'Leary, Pomona College
Harmony O'Rourke, Pitzer College
Sumita Pahwa, Scripps College
Seo Young Park, Scripps College
Joe Parker, Professor Emeritus, Pitzer College
Marina Perez de Mendiola, Scripps College
Susan A. Phillips, Pitzer College
Suyapa Portillo, Pitzer College
Muriel Poston, Professor Emerita, Pitzer College
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Hans J. Rindisbacher, Pomona College
Ethan Ritz, Harvey Mudd College
Rita Roberts, Professor Emerita, Scripps College
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David Kawalko Roselli, Scripps College
Erin Runions, Pomona College
Tomás F. Summers Sandoval Jr., Pomona College
Carmen Sanjuan-Pastor, Scripps College
Sarah Sarzynski, Claremont McKenna College
Xanda Schofield, Harvey Mudd College
David Seitz, Harvey Mudd College
Dan Segal, Professor Emeritus, Pitzer College
Shahriar Shahriari, Pomona College
Marie-Denise Shelton, Claremont McKenna College
Brian Shuve, Harvey Mudd College
Victor Silverman, Professor Emeritus, Pomona College
Darryl A. Smith, Pomona College
Maryan Soliman, Scripps College
Tessa Solomon-Lane, Scripps and Pitzer Colleges
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Samuel Yamashita, Pomona College
Kathy Yep, Pitzer College

Department Endorsements:
Intercollegiate Department of Africana Studies
Intercollegiate Department of Asian American Studies
Intercollegiate Department of Chicano/a Latino/a Studies at the Claremont Colleges
Scripps College Department of Spanish, Latin American, and Caribbean Literatures and Cultures

In addition to the 150 individual signatures and 4 Departmental endorsements, 37 faculty members have signed anonymously. Anonymous signatures include pre-tenure, contingent, and visiting faculty as well as faculty whose administrative positions preclude them from signing such statements.