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As **Jewish students, alumni, faculty, and staff** at the University of Chicago, we stand in solidarity with the Palestinian people in their struggle for liberation, and we oppose, unequivocally, the dangerous conflation of anti-zionism with antisemitism. Moreover, we affirm our complete support for [Students for Justice in Palestine \(SJP\)](#) and for the UChicago United for Palestine coalition. We urgently call for a permanent ceasefire and for the immediate end of Israeli occupation, apartheid, and colonization.

As we write, the horrors taking place in Gaza have defied imagination. Over 14,500 Palestinians have been killed, including over 6,000 children. Israel has bombed hospitals, schools, refugee camps and residential neighborhoods. It has dropped leaflets warning residents of northern Gaza that anyone who stays there will be considered an accomplice to terrorism, and then bombed them as they fled south. Israel has displaced more than 1.7 million Palestinians, and it is uncertain if they will be able to return to their homes. Between October 7 and October 12, by its own account, Israel dropped 6,000 bombs on Gaza—nearly equalling the number of bombs the United States dropped on Afghanistan in one year. As the death toll from the aerial bombardments and ground invasion rises, Palestinians suffer additional dangers from the indiscriminate obliteration of their basic infrastructure. The Israeli government has cut off access to food, water, fuel and electricity. The UN has warned that every Palestinian in Gaza faces an immediate threat of starvation. Compounding this dire situation, Israel has repeatedly cut communications and withheld essential medical aid, and prevented people from knowing if their loved ones are alive.

This is mass displacement. This is genocide. As Rashida Tlaib said, “Palestinian lives are not disposable.” Each and every human being lost is a world, with loved ones, dreams, and futures. Palestinian lives matter.

We mourn with our fellow Jews over the loss of life on October 7th but we refuse to view the current moment in isolation. Israel as a political project is built on 75 years of occupation, apartheid and ethnic cleansing which have led up to this current genocide. Between 1947 and 1949, Zionist militias expelled over 750,000 Palestinians from their homes. Of the approximately 150,000 Palestinians remaining in the parts of Palestine that were claimed by the newly formed Israeli state, 30,000 to 40,000 were internally displaced and barred from returning home. Zionists occupied 78% of historic Palestine, and murdered about 15,000 Palestinians in mass atrocities and massacres.

Those of us who write or sign have taken many paths toward recognizing that the creation of an ethnic Jewish nation state in historic Palestine has been a Nakba, a catastrophe, for the Palestinian people, a catastrophe that continues to this day. This has required, for many of us, personal and collective efforts to shift the perspectives we grew up with, to dismantle the ideological fusing of Judaism with political nationalism, to learn from Palestinians and their allies

the world over about Palestinian history, struggle, and loss, as well as Islamophobia and anti-Arab racism, and to recognize that none of us are free until all of us are free.

Even 75 years later these processes of expropriation and exploitation continue in full force. [Settlements](#) have encroached upon more than 40 percent of the occupied West Bank. Since 1967, the state of Israel has supported the construction of more than 221 settlements and outposts on Palestinian land in the West Bank. Settlers have attacked Palestinians in the West Bank, terrorizing them and disrupting the olive harvest season. Over 226 Palestinians in the West Bank have been killed in the last seven weeks.

This takes place in a context where Palestinians in the West Bank are denied basic civil rights in a system that amounts to apartheid. Israel has implemented a [policy of movement restrictions](#), including checkpoints, man-made earth mounds, trenches, the Apartheid Wall, and an intricate and difficult system of traveling permits. Palestinians in the West Bank are tried in military courts rather than civil courts. Israel currently holds over 10,000 Palestinian prisoners, many of whom are imprisoned under what Israel euphemistically calls [“administrative detention” without charges or trial](#). While imprisoned, they are subject to abuse, torture, starvation, medical neglect, and solitary confinement.

In Gaza, we see the emergence of what Israeli sociologist Baruch Kimmerling has called the largest concentration camp in the world. For the past 16 years, Gaza has been under a brutal air, sea and land blockade. Palestinians have been denied essential medicine, starved, and routinely massacred by Israel. As Jewish Voice for Peace (JVP) reports, [“Ten-year-olds who live in Gaza have already been traumatized by seven major bombing campaigns in their short lives.”](#) Palestinians have the right to safety, to freedom, and to resist occupation.

As human beings, we cannot be silent.

As Jews at the University of Chicago, we call on the University of Chicago to divest from Israel’s genocide in Gaza. The University of Chicago is complicit in the genocide we are witnessing through its investment in weapons contractors and manufacturers. The University’s wealth is paying for the bombs the Israeli government is using to level the infrastructure of Gaza. On this campus, Hillel, Chabad, and Maroons for Israel have adopted a rigid “pro-Israel” stance that refuses to acknowledge the ongoing genocide.

At the University of Chicago, Columbia, and universities across the country, accusations of antisemitism are being used as a cudgel to silence pro-Palestinian speech and punish student activists. We have increasingly seen statements of basic facts—such as that Gaza is occupied territory, or that thousands of Palestinian children have been killed—labeled as antisemitic. Also labeled as antisemitic are political judgments that many, including this group, share—for example, that the current massacre is a genocide. As Jews, we are committed to naming injustice where we see it, even if it makes others uncomfortable. Opposition to a political ideology such as Zionism is in no way the same as anti-Jewish bigotry. Anti-Zionism is not antisemitism. As Jews, we are here to say firmly: **Not In Our Name.**

Today, we also see a rising coalition on and off campus fighting for a future in which Jewish safety isn't predicated on destruction of Palestinian lives and land. Israel and pro-Israel organizations weaponize our identity as Jews. The institutions on campus that claim to represent us have taken an expressly Zionist stance. We reject their attempts to speak for us. Many of us have found our home in UChicago United for Palestine or outside of campus Jewish groups, because the Jewish institutions on campus do not represent us. The multi-racial student-led movement that has taken form as UChicago United for Palestine gives us hope and direction in our struggle. We wholeheartedly reaffirm their demands for a public meeting with President Paul Alivisatos and the administration, transparency in University investments, and full divestment from weapons contractors and manufacturers that arm Israeli genocide.

If you are a fellow Jew on campus, disgusted at the genocide being carried out in our name, appalled by our university's complicity in this genocide, and horrified by the Jewish institutions on campus minimizing or even condoning this genocide, we encourage you to [sign on to this statement \(anonymously or publicly\) and join us in UChicago Jews for a Free Palestine.](#)

UChicago Jews for a Free Palestine

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