English Department Statement in Support of Palestine and Lebanon

We–a majority of members of the English Department at California State University, San Bernardino–firmly condemn the ongoing violence against Palestine and Lebanon by the Israeli government.

We firmly stand against both Islamophobia and anti-Semitism. While Israel is home to many Jewish people, we recognize that the actions of a government and its security forces are not representative of a people or their faith. By conflating the attacks on Arab civilians with the safety of Jewish people, Israel's prime minister seeks to create a rhetorical shield for their acts against humanity. In fact, many Jewish people and organizations have made clear that they, too, stand against this ongoing violence.

We recognize the Palestinian and Lebanese people's right to live and thrive, and their children's right to grow old. We recognize that Gaza is the indigenous homeland of Palestinians, and they are the owners and sole decision makers when it comes to its future.

The Israeli government has launched air strikes on heavily populated communities, hospitals, and schools resulting in over 62,000 Palestinian casualties–including an estimated 17,000 children–and an estimated 3,000 Lebanese dead (as of this writing). All twelve universities in Gaza have been destroyed, and over two hundred journalists have been killed. We call for Israel and the US to fulfill their obligations so that a cease-fire continues to hold. We call for an arms embargo. And we call on our elected representatives to stand against all military aid that the US provides to Israel because without these resources the loss of civilian life would be dramatically decreased. We call for emergency relief and reconstruction efforts.

Finally, we affirm student and faculty rights to freedom of expression. The university should be a place where students feel safe standing up for their beliefs. We support the statements made by the CSUSB Center for the Study of Muslim & Arab Worlds, CSUSB's Ethnic Studies Department, Fresno State's English Department Open Letter to President Saúl Jiménez-Sandoval, and the thousands of students, staff, and faculty who have bravely spoken out against violence and injustice.

Transparency Note:

This statement of support was proposed, drafted, and voted on over the course of several months. The idea was first proposed by a faculty member via email to the faculty listserv. Several faculty supported the idea and the proposal became a discussion point for the next department meeting. An earlier version of this statement was co-drafted by a faculty-student team and shared during the November 1st department meeting. After a discussion on the statement draft, a decision was made to send a confidential survey available to all faculty members.

Twenty-five faculty responded to the survey with 60% voting "I support putting the statement as written on the English department website," 16% voting "I support putting a somewhat revised statement on the English department website," and 24% voting "I do not support putting the statement on the English department website." The results and the accompanying comments

left on the survey were presented and discussed during the November 22nd department meeting. After some discussion, faculty members voted that the statement should be revised taking into account some of the comments provided in the confidential survey and then posted to the department website.

After a revision, faculty held another vote in April, with 26 participants. 81% of faculty supported the revised statement being placed on the website and 19% were not in support.

Therefore, this statement does not represent full consensus from the department, but it models healthy disagreements, collaboration, and democratic discussions and decisions.