Hiroshima Palestine Tomoshibi Solidarity Community
(Hiroshima-Palestine Vigil Community)

Mr. Kazumi Matsui,
Mayor of Hiroshima City and President of the Hiroshima Mayors for Peace
Mr. Tatsunori Motoya,
Chairperson of Hiroshima City Council

Open Letter of Inquiry

Since October 7th, 2023, Israel has been conducting a large-scale military aggression in Palestine, (Gaza and the West Bank, including East Jerusalem)[1] in retaliation for Hamas' cross-border attacks from Gaza, which Israel continues to blockade. As the global media have reported, Israel, which has overwhelming military power, has indiscriminately bombed Gaza on a massive scale, with over 100,000 unarmed Palestinian civilians killed, injured, or missing, including over 12,000 children (United Nations, February 2024). Palestinians cannot evacuate from the closed space separated by the Apartheid Wall (racial segregation wall); are left without a safe place to shelter; and are deprived of minimum needs for survival such as drinking water, food, and fuel.

This is not an exchange of violence, but an unprecedented humanitarian crisis that leads to starvation and disease, a unilateral mass murder, ethnic cleansing, genocide, and forced displacement.

In response to this situation, we, the Hiroshima-Palestine Vigil Community, made up of Hiroshima and foreign citizens (including Muslims, Christians and Jews with close ties to the related region), have been gathering in front of the Atomic Bomb Dome every night to commemorate the victims and help as many citizens and travelers as possible to deepen their understanding of the situation in Palestine. Since October 13th, we have been holding a nightly appeal to end the genocide and occupation in Palestine by urging people to take action.

On January 26, 2024, the International Criminal Court of Justice ordered Israel to refrain from acts of genocide, as defined in the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of

the Crime of Genocide[2], and to refrain from acts that directly and openly incite genocide. Interim measures were also ordered, including prevention of genocidal acts, punishment for the incitement to genocide, and immediate and effective measures to ensure humanitarian assistance to civilians in Gaza. Although the International Criminal Court of Justice has not recognized Israeli mass killing as "genocide" at this time, it does suggest the possibility of "genocide." We consider Israeli mass murder to be genocide. Despite such measures having been ordered, Israel has declared a continuation of its military offensive. 2,918 people (as of February 12) have been killed since January 26.

Hiroshima City, which has experienced a large-scale destruction unprecedented in its history and has set the goal of becoming an “International City of Peace and Culture”, is witness to the historical injustice and humanitarian crisis currently unfolding in Palestine.

As a civic community operating in the Peace Park, we have met and spoken with many Hiroshima citizens and travelers from all over the world who overwhelmingly empathize with the Palestinian people. So, we would like to ask the City Council of Hiroshima this question. “Is the City of Hiroshima willing to take concrete action for peace in Palestine?"

Please answer the following five questions by February 20 so we can come back to receive your answers.

(1) Do you recognize that the Israeli attack on Gaza is a large-scale military attack against civilians in violation of international law and also a genocide to eliminate a group of people?

(2) Since October 7, approximately 220 local governments in Japan have adopted resolutions calling for peace in Palestine, including a resolution calling for a humanitarian truce in the Gaza Strip. However, there are no reports that the City of Hiroshima or the Hiroshima City Council have issued a statement or resolution in response to this invasion, humanitarian crisis, or genocide. On the other hand, the Hiroshima City Council adopted a resolution calling for a peaceful resolution to the Russian invasion of Ukraine only one week after the invasion began. What is the reason for the clear difference in response to the invasion of Ukraine and the invasion of Palestine?

(3) We believe that the invasion of Gaza is also a nuclear issue because Israel is a nuclear power. Various Israeli politicians have claimed multiple times in the past four months that

they will use nuclear weapons in Gaza. Are the City of Hiroshima and the Hiroshima City Council aware that the current situation in Gaza is a nuclear issue?

(4) The City of Hiroshima has commissioned the Hiroshima Peace Culture Foundation, an affiliated organization, to run the "Hiroshima Conference of Mayors for Peace," a non-governmental organization that brings together cities around the world in solidarity across national borders to work together to pave the way toward the abolition of nuclear weapons.
Its charter states that in addition to addressing the nuclear weapons issue, the organization will “strive to eliminate hunger, poverty, and other problems that threaten the coexistence of humankind, as well as to resolve refugee problems, human rights issues, and protect the environment”（https://www.mayorsforpeace.org/en/about-us/covenants/）. Its members include 28 Palestinian cities (including Gaza), 54 Israeli cities, (including Dimona and Yavneh, cities with a research nuclear reactor). Please indicate what response the Mayors for Peace has had to date regarding the recent incursions, humanitarian crises, and genocide in its member cities.

5) In Article 2 of the “Hiroshima City Basic Ordinance for Peace Promotion” adopted in 2021, the City of Hiroshima defines "peace" to be promoted by the City of Hiroshima as "a state in which all nuclear weapons in the world have been abolished and there is no war or other armed conflict.” Based on this ordinance, does the City of Hiroshima, the Hiroshima City Council, or the Hiroshima Mayors for Peace plan to make any resolutions, appeals, or actions regarding the current situation in Palestine in the near future? If so, when, and if not, why not?

We would appreciate your response by February 20, 2024.

Yours truly,

Hiroshima Palestine Vigil Community

Coordinator: Rebecca Maria Goldschmidt
Malachi Nelson
Aoe Tanami
Masae Yuasa

Contact: hiroshimapalestinevigil@proton.me
080-2116-3410 (Yuasa)

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1 Until the beginning of the 20th century, Palestine was ruled by the Ottoman Empire and was part of a predominantly Arab region, but settlement activities by the Zionist movement that began in Europe in the 1890s gained momentum under the British Mandate. In 1948, the Zionist army made about 900,000 Palestinians refugees during the Nakba (The Catastrophe) and proclaimed the state of Israel. Since then, Israel has begun full-scale colonial rule and ethnic cleansing of Palestine, and has continued its policy of apartheid in violation of international law. Therefore, the original Palestine includes the present-day Israeli territories. However, here we refer to Palestine as Gaza and West Bank including East Jerusalem, which have been occupied by Israel since 1967.

2 According to Article 2 of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide, genocide means any of the following acts committed with intent to destroy, in whole or in part, a national, ethnical, racial or religious group, as such:

(a) Killing members of the group;

(b) Causing serious bodily or mental harm to members of the group;

(c) Deliberately inflicting on the group conditions of life calculated to bring about its physical destruction in whole or in part;

(d) Imposing measures intended to prevent births within the group;

(e) Forcibly transferring children of the group to another group.