

Jafra: The Palestinian Student Committee- Community Agreements

Meaning of Jafra

The name 'Jafra' comes from a traditional Palestinian folk song. The song tells the love story of Jafra and Zareef. Jafra and Zareef were a young couple set to marry, but on the night of their wedding, Jafra left for reasons unknown. Zareef was so heartbroken he wrote the love song "Jafra" (which was not her real name, instead meaning a woman from Yaffa). And from then on, he would travel around Palestine, barge into weddings, take center stage, and sing his love song to Jafra. Eventually, no event was complete without the playing of Jafra.

Over time and displacement, Jafra became a symbol for Palestine, because wherever Palestinians went they would sing about their love for Palestine. With lyrics such as, "Whatever money being collected, and jars filled with gold, soil of the homeland will only be my eye liner," symbolizing the weight of living in exile. Another lyric, even if the foreign land 'was covered in honey, it will never be sweet' as living in Palestine.

Introduction

Jafra, named after a symbol of undying love and resilience, is a representation of our collective voice and commitment to Palestinian rights and dignity. As Zareef did for Jafra, we write these agreements with the intention of honoring Palestine in all organizing spaces within CUAD and beyond.

Our committee is dedicated to fostering a supportive, inclusive environment that centers Palestinian experiences and narratives at the heart of our activism. We appreciate the work and support of our allies, and welcome them to share in our culture. These community agreements outline the principles and values that guide our work, and the practical applications of those values in organizing.

Jafra's Consulting Power

In our collaboration and decision-making processes, Palestine's interests and well-being are paramount. Like a compass, they guide our actions and priorities, standing above all considerations within our coalition and our committee. This principle ensures that our focus remains unwaveringly on advocating for Palestinian rights and justice. The consultation power is stated in CUAD's structure in which it declares "the right of certain orgs to be consulted before any final decision by the Coalition is made." Our coalition should always strive to reach consensus and Jafra's consulting power is essential for a democratic decision aligned with the Palestinian cause.

VALUE / INTENTION	IN PRACTICE
<p>Palestinian right to narrate - Centering Palestinian voices</p> <p>Acknowledging the vital role of Palestinian voices and experiences in our movement, we commit to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognizing the unique positionality of Palestinians in the diaspora, who are simultaneously mourning loss and organizing the movement towards liberation. • Addressing the historical marginalization and erasure of Palestinians through narrative. • Ensuring that our activism is informed and led by those it seeks to support. 	<p>To ensure Palestine remains central to our collective efforts, we propose the following for all CUAD spaces:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Consult Jafra (Palestinian Student group) – either individual members or collectively – in the process of all major decisions or in the case of any uncertainty. • Ground our work in the realities and aspirations of the Palestinian people. As much as possible, draw information from trusted sources and generational knowledge.
<p>Move with care and intention rather than urgency</p> <p>As the fight for Palestinian liberation is well into its 75th year, we recognize that:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Our work follows a lineage of past organizers, from whom we have much to learn and build upon. • The push toward urgency and immediacy is a tool of the oppressor, we instead maintain tactful, intentional, and sustainable work. 	<p>To ensure a sustainable movement, we propose that organizing should prioritize:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Establishing clear division of responsibilities that ensures all members are informed of the CAUD values and accountable to them. • Zoom out: When work becomes urgent, take time to ensure decisions align with larger goals. • Reach Out: Communicate capacity and trust in the abilities of community members when breaks are necessary. • Mentorship/Training: Care for one another through mentoring relationships, and support our collective education and growth.
<p>Present the Image of Palestine and Palestinians with love and reverence</p> <p>Until we are able to return to Palestine, she will live in the global imagination. This means that we must take care to center imagery and language which builds a future for Palestine that is not rooted in suffering and loss.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • In visualizing: Avoid using imagery which restricts the imagined Palestinians to perpetual victimhood. Avoid blood and gore which deter curiosity, instead invent creative, tactful ways to call for solidarity.
<p>Safe Engagement Practices</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critical Kindness: Our critiques and opinions will be offered with kindness, aiming to build rather than tear down. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Critique each other's actions and ideas instead of character. Use words like “I feel” and “I think” so it does not feel like people are being attacked.

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Allyship Recognition: We recognize and appreciate our allies' support while centering the unique experiences of Palestinians in Palestine. ● Respect each others' identities: Respect racial, cultural, gender/sexuality identities. Trust others' lived realities/experiences. 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Stepping back and understanding that Palestine is a liberation movement that is above all of us and we must center the voices of Palestinians in Palestine first. ● Respecting comrades' identities – including, but not limited to, using their correct pronouns and correcting ourselves and others politely when someone is mis-identified. Respecting and understanding that racial capitalism and colonialism are the root causes of our oppression and none of us are free until we are all free.
<p>Al Thawabet</p> <p>Jafra upholds and expects all CUAD members in solidarity with the Palestinian liberation movement to uphold the Thawabet. The Thawabet are the core principles guiding us towards liberation. Also known as the Palestinian red-lines, all factions of the resistance and all political parties working towards true Palestinian liberation uphold the Thawabet. The Thawabet reflect Palestinians' inviolable rights and must remain central to and uncompromised in organizing, education, and publishing regarding Palestine.</p>	<p>Uphold Al Thawabet</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● The right to resist the Zionist entity by any means necessary ● The right to return for all Palestinians ● Jerusalem is the capital of Palestine ● Palestinian right to self-determination and autonomy over historic Palestine ● Denounce normalization in all its forms <p>Additional source on the Thawabet here.</p>
<p>Humility Regarding Knowledge on Palestine</p> <p>The Palestinian people are still in the process of comprehending and understanding the level of oppression and injustice that we have been facing for over 75 years. The oppressors have distorted the perception of reality and employed all of their resources to bury and manipulate the truth. Based on this, we are humble about our knowledge and are continuously learning and discovering more about what it means to be Palestinian. At the same time- we refuse to legitimize their distortions of truth and do not expend energy on correcting or refuting their blatant manipulations.</p> <p>Complexity is the nature of oppression. Palestinians experience different forms of oppression depending on our social and geographical circumstances. For example, Palestinians in refugee camps (in Gaza,</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Be humble about what you know. The Palestinian experience of oppression and struggle for liberation requires a deep level of humility and openness because Palestinians themselves are still synthesizing and processing their own knowledge and experiences. ● Be compassionate towards Palestinian students, who are enduring the trauma of an unfolding genocide and coping with the loss of family members on top of their preexisting generational trauma. While trying to balance the role of being a student at an oppressive institution, it's crucial to place empathy and care at the forefront.

West Bank, and neighboring countries) have different experiences of oppression than Palestinians that live by the separation wall, or Palestinians who live in Jerusalem, or Palestinians who live in the diaspora, or Palestinians who live as a fifth class in "Israel." We are one people who cannot be divided, and simultaneously, we are a people with a multitude of lived experiences and dynamic identities that must inform how we speak about our oppression.

As Palestinians, we will never completely comprehend the intergenerational and ongoing traumas that we hold. We ask our allies to acknowledge this uncertainty and support the effort to learn and educate others while we concurrently learn about ourselves.

- Palestine is not only an academic exercise in decolonization, but an ongoing liberation struggle that requires learning, unlearning, and active participation. Just because you have had the privilege and opportunity to unlearn propaganda or access historical resources on parts of Palestinian culture that are stifled and hidden by colonial systems, does not mean you have authority to control the narrative.
- Respect the perspectives and narratives of Palestinians, as they are rooted in multigenerational experiences. It is considerate to give priority to Palestinians in the room, being generous with space and time in conversation is a form of repair.

Conclusion

This community agreement represents our collective commitment to creating a supportive, just, and effective movement for Palestinian liberation. By adhering to these principles and values, we strengthen our solidarity and ensure our activism is respectful, inclusive, and impactful.

Gaza Solidarity Encampment: Community Guidelines

1. We all commit to remain grounded in why we enter this space - as an act of solidarity with the Palestinian people facing the deadliest year in a 75 year long, US (and Columbia)-funded, genocide of the Palestinian people.
2. No desecration of the land, no littering. Please pick up your trash.
3. We recognize our role as visitors, and for many of us, colonizers, on this land. We camp with an acute awareness that we do so on colonized Lenapehoking land, which after being ethnically cleansed of its indigenous population has experienced subsequent waves of racist displacement, including most recently by Columbia University in the displacement of the Black and brown Harlem community.
4. No drug use/alcohol consumption inside the camp since that may make people uncomfortable, increase risk of police targeting, and ultimately this camp exists in service of Palestine, and "partying" in such a space would be an offense to the cause that has brought us here. If people would like to smoke, they can do so outside of the lawn. We don't want to police each other or each other's patterns of substance use, but want to ensure that people feel comfortable in the space.
5. Respect personal boundaries - tight quarters are not an excuse to cross physical boundaries without affirmative consent.
6. We commit to never photographing or videotaping another community member without their affirmative consent.
7. We commit to not share the names or details of anyone we meet in this camp space with someone in the administration as we realize they could be targeted and this could cause them great harm. We keep us safe, that includes refusing to comply with any demands if the NYPD, Private Investigators, or Columbia Admin try to force us to disclose the identities of any of our fellow students!
8. We commit to assuming best intentions, granting ourselves and others grace when mistakes are made, and approaching conflict with the goal of addressing and repairing.
9. Please think of community members when making decisions about autonomous action. Not everyone has consented to the same levels of risk, but everyone will be affected by decisions that community members make.
10. Do not engage with counter protesters.
11. If you enter the space you commit to taking care of the space.