

Dear Members of the Fort Bragg City Council,

I am writing in full support of the Ceasefire resolution presented to the Fort Bragg City Council by a group of concerned city residents. This resolution calls on Fort Bragg to join many other cities in calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, release of all hostages, unrestricted entry of humanitarian aid to Gaza, restoration of food, water, electricity, internet and medical supplies and the other demands of this resolution.

I have been the rabbi of the Mendocino Coast Jewish Community for the past 35 years. But I write here as an individual from my own heart and conscience, acknowledging that the views of people in our Jewish community vary at this painful and challenging moment. I am sickened and horrified by the mass murder of Israeli Jews and others in Israel, and by the taking of hostages by Hamas, on October 7. I ache for those still in captivity and those who have lost their lives as captives over the past four months. I know that in the small country of Israel the pain of these terrible events ripples outward to touch people all over the country. And for many it restimulates trauma from historical experiences of being victims of mass murder. I understand that there needs to be some kind of response on the part of Israel and the international community to these terrible acts.

At the same time the scale of violence, killing, destruction of housing, hospitals, schools and infrastructure in Gaza to date boggles the imagination. According to the United Nations, as of February 4 2024, at least 27,365 Palestinians were killed in Gaza. About 70 per cent of those killed are said to be women and children. Communicable diseases like typhoid are currently breaking out owing to lack of basic sanitation and medical care in Gaza. The closed border, preventing refugees from leaving and aid from entering is the stuff of nightmares, particularly as the city of Rafah, which until recently has been a place where displaced Gazans have been directed to flee, is now targeted for an extensive bombing campaign. Calling on whole populations to flee to avoid mass bombing is dreadful — the fact that they are then hit with mass destruction in places that were supposed to be their refuge is doubly awful. We are all awash in images and statistics; one which sticks with me is this: according to the BBC, as of the end of January 2024 between 144,000 and 175,000 buildings across the whole Gaza Strip have been damaged or destroyed. That's between 50% and 61% of Gaza's buildings. One can scarcely imagine a similar devastation here. And it shows no sign of letting up.

I take heart from the international uprising to demand an end to this destruction, and I hope that the City of Fort Bragg will join in this call. Usually the business of our local City Council is to take care of the business of the city. But citizens of Fort Bragg are also citizens of the world, and your vote for this resolution will amplify those voices calling for an end to this terrible violence, raise them up to the County, to the State, to the US government and to the international community. What you do with this resolution matters.

With respect, Rabbi Margaret Holub