

Dear fellow citizens on the Fort Bragg City Council,

We are writing to you as a coalition of concerned citizens who are working to take action against the ongoing and shocking violence occurring in the Israel-Gaza conflict. After months of weekly demonstrations outside Town Hall calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza, a group of local citizens including a Palestinian, a Muslim, several Jewish folks, and others decided that we need to do more than just demonstrate. The group came together and, through a consensus process, drafted what we hope will become a city resolution calling for an immediate ceasefire. We presented our proposed resolution during non-agenda public comments at the Fort Bragg City Council meeting on February 12th, and we are grateful that the profound public support apparent at that meeting moved the Council to place our proposed resolution on the agenda for the upcoming meeting on February 26th.

According to data from Reuters, at least 70 US cities have passed resolutions relating to the Israel-Gaza conflict (*Reuters*, 2/2/24). These resolutions have ranged from calling for an end to Israel's bombardment, to condemning the October 7th attacks in Israel, to more generalized calls for peace in the region. In drafting our Fort Bragg community resolution, we focused on what has been happening in the conflict from October 7th to the present. We kept our verbiage as non-partisan as possible, focusing on the loss of civilian lives on both sides of the conflict and striving to stay away from hot button issues, trigger words, and the long historical background. Our proposed resolution is attached to this letter.

Some people have argued that such resolutions are not within the purview of municipal councils and distract from domestic issues. However, the purpose of this nationwide groundswell of municipal resolutions is to generate evidence of the will of the people in regards to the horrific loss of life happening in the Gaza Strip. Such evidence leads to cumulative public pressure that moves up the chain of national representation to influence decision-making at the federal level. The passing of resolutions empowers a city council to make the voices of its constituents heard, and such resolutions have come from cities large and small in states across the nation. Cotati, Oakland, and San Francisco stand as some more-nearby examples, while Chicago has become the largest city in the nation to pass one.

Furthermore, federal spending of public funds is always a domestic issue. Our government has provided billions of dollars in military support to Israel and those funds equate to money out of all of our pockets. The U.S. Campaign for Palestinian Rights estimates that, in 2023, the average taxpayer paid \$25.25 to provide armaments and other military support to Israel--this figure translates to well over \$100,000 provided by our local tax dollars (*US Campaign for Palestinian Rights*). That figure will substantially rise in 2024. Jon Shwarz, a journalist writing for *The Intercept*, detailed in a December 2023 article how any taxpayer can calculate their approximate tax contribution to Israel's military (*The Intercept*, 12/28/23). An example calculation reveals that a taxpayer who buys no government bonds and pays \$25,000 in federal taxes has contributed approximately \$100 to the violence in Gaza.

This violence is ongoing, and so is our government's complicity through material support of Israel's military. Time is of the essence in raising public pressure to call for a ceasefire. As of February 19th, at least 29,000 people have been killed in Gaza. Approximately 70% of those

killed have been women and children. Additionally, at least 69,000 Palestinian people have been wounded. Less than half of Gaza's hospitals are even partially functioning (*AP*, 2/19/24). Almost 1.9 million Gazans are displaced from their homes with nearly 1.4 million of them sheltering in overcrowded facilities, leading to dire increases in communicable disease. Up to 97% of people have inadequate food. This is largely due to Israel intensifying their standing blockade of Gaza into a "total siege," and Israel has been accused by Human Rights Watch of "using starvation of civilians as a method of warfare" (*U.N. via ReliefWeb*, 1/7/2024). According to the U.N. High Commissioner, hundreds of Palestinian women and girls are being held in Israeli detention, and he reports that there have been numerous credible reports of rapes and other sexual assaults (*AP*, 2/19/24).

We are very grateful that you have scheduled our resolution proposal as an agenda item for the February 26th City Council meeting. Now, we implore you to pass our resolution so that we, the citizens of Fort Bragg, can join dozens of other cities in our country in demanding a ceasefire now. We have collected hundreds of petition signatures from Fort Bragg City and Mendocino County residents in support of our proposed resolution, and we will present those materials to you along with our presentation on February 26th. Thank you.

Respectfully yours ,

Ceasefire Now Working Group:

Jasmine Diaz, Local Business Owner at Ficus & Fern

Dylan Stipe, Indigenous Youth & Fort Bragg Resident

Megan Caron, Fort Bragg Resident & Local Business Owner

Abraham Cohen, Fort Bragg Resident & Homeowner

Sheila Dawn Tracy, Labor Activist