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To:

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[City Council](#); [Mary Gourley](#)

Subject:

Voicing my Support

Date:

Tuesday, April 2, 2024 1:58:57 PM

Dear City Council Members,

My name is Irwin Keller. I am the Rabbi at Congregation Ner Shalom in Cotati. I am writing to you as an individual, although my congregants, including many Sebastopol residents, know that I am a strong supporter of ceasefire between Israel and Gaza, and they are overwhelmingly supportive of my stance.

In January I appeared before the Cotati City Council and spoke in support of that ceasefire resolution. Since then two and half months have passed and who can count the lives that have been lost since?

As I said back then, my connection with Israel is long and strong. I have visited more times than I can count, including during this war. I studied in Jerusalem in college. My husband is an Israeli citizen who served in the IDF, and two of his cousins were murdered in Hamas's attack on October 7. So I come to you as someone invested in Israel's security and in Israel's peaceful future.

American Jews are being continually asked to support Israel's war effort, as if that is how one supports the people of Israel. But in 6 months this effort has not succeeded in bringing home the hostages held by Hamas. Nor has it roused Hamas or done anything meaningful to heal the trauma of October 7. It has, however, uprooted an entire population, ended tens of thousands of innocent lives, and subjected the families of Gaza to unspeakable conditions of threat and starvation.

This must stop. It simply must. The Israeli people, awakening now from their grief and trauma, are beginning to demand a new government. The families of the Israeli hostages held in Gaza have taken the lead in demanding a ceasefire. I will follow their example.

There is much I could say about the past. There is much I would like to envision for the future. But in this moment, past and future don't matter. What matters is that the fighting and the suffering stop now.

Some people question whether ceasefire resolutions make a difference. They dismiss them as symbolic. But symbolic does is not the same as *meaningless*. A resolution would represent the peaceful instincts and aspirations of the people who live and work here in our shared community, and it would join with the voices of others around the country to manifest a broad demand for peace.

In time we will all look back and be answerable for what we did in this moment of terrible pain. I would like to know that I spoke out for peace when I had the chance, even if our words are imperfect. I hope you will join me.

Thank you for your time and your service,

Irwin Keller

RABBI IRWIN KELLER



(Please note: I don't respond to emails on Shabbat or holidays.)