



The following statement is issued by the National Lawyers Guild and allied students at Fordham Law, a vast and diverse coalition comprised of people from various political and religious traditions:

“We issue this statement to express our disappointment in Fordham’s failure to acknowledge the Palestinian people who have been killed over this past month—and since 1948—by the Israeli apartheid government. In fact, the University and Law School have refused to even say “Palestine” in any official communications. As law students, we are compelled to recognize and oppose these violations of Palestinian civilians’ human rights.

We join Fordham University and Fordham Law School in their acknowledgment and mourning of the Israeli lives lost at the hands of Hamas. The loss of civilian life, especially of children, is unspeakable and heart-wrenching. We grieve alongside our colleagues at the law school for whom this violence is particularly painful, especially the Muslim and Jewish members of our community.

Thirteen hundred Israelis were killed during Hamas’s attack on October 7. Since then, at least 4,000 Palestinians have been killed in Israeli airstrikes as of October 20, with the death toll rising daily. More than one million Palestinians have been displaced. Israel’s full siege on the Gaza Strip has left these people with nowhere to go, with no water, no electricity, and no hope.

These numbers, quantifying the death and suffering of innocent people, are staggering. This scale of devastation leaves us heartbroken for the people whose lives have been brutally cut short and left behind in rubble that was once homes, schools, and communities.

Against the backdrop of this complete annihilation, we condemn the Israeli government’s use of a tragedy to justify the collective punishment, mass slaughter, and forced displacement of Palestinian civilians. The Israeli government’s attacks on Palestine are acts of genocide, as defined by Art. II of the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide.¹

¹ Article II of the Genocide Convention provides that “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:

We call upon the Fordham Law community to condemn Israel's blatant war crimes, including the [blockade](#) of water, food, fuel, electricity, internet, medicine, and any sort of humanitarian aid into Gaza. Members of the press, doctors, the elderly, and children are among those killed by Israeli airstrikes. Israel has bombed schools, hospitals, mosques, churches, residential buildings, UN facilities, and world heritage sites.

The Israeli government has also deployed chemical weapons on civilians, illegally dousing the people of Gaza with gaseous white phosphorus. Israeli government officials have proudly gone on television to justify these tactics. Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu said that Israel is unleashing unprecedented force in Gaza, and warned "[this is just the beginning](#)."

The use of dehumanizing language has further fueled the widespread defense of such atrocious, genocidal acts. Israel's Defense Minister has characterized the people of Gaza as "human animals," and its Minister of Energy and Infrastructure [said](#) that Gazans "will not receive a drop of water or a single battery until they leave the world." Israel has [defined](#) Gaza as a whole as an "enemy entity" since 2007. Prime Minister Netanyahu has [asserted](#) that Israel will wage a prolonged offensive and will turn Gaza "into rubble."

This rhetoric hurts innocent people far beyond the borders of Israel and Palestine. This month, students at Fordham Law have experienced heightened anxiety and fear given the rise of Islamophobic, racist, and anti-Arab sentiment expressed in response to any sympathy for Palestine and its people. We have seen the ramifications of speaking up during this time across the country, but we cannot allow the post-September 11 racist and anti-Muslim sentiments to repeat.

It is of utmost importance that Fordham Law School and University uphold and protect free speech and academic freedom. Despite the growing threat to student safety, universities across the country have issued one-sided statements which ignore and dehumanize the Palestinian people while mischaracterizing pro-Palestine student organizing as violent. So far, Fordham has stifled support for

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- (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."

All states are bound as a matter of law by the principle that genocide is a crime prohibited under international law. The International Court of Justice has affirmed that the prohibition of genocide is a peremptory norm of international law from which no derogation is allowed. The Convention provides that individuals who attempt genocide or who incite to genocide "shall be punished, whether they are constitutionally responsible rulers, public officials or private individuals".

Palestinian liberation—we need look no further than [the lawsuit which banned any Students for Justice in Palestine \(SJP\) club to be a formal organization on campus](#).

The Palestinian flag, the *keffiyeh*, the existence of Palestinian people on our campus, and the word “Palestine” must not be falsely vilified as terrorism. We speak out, not because of religion, but in ardent defense of human rights and dignity for all. Palestinian Jews and Christians exist—they are part of our Fordham community, and their families are victims of this genocide, too.

As a multi-racial and multi-religious coalition of Palestinian, Jewish, Muslim, Arab, Christian, Hindu, and allied students, we state unequivocally that criticism of Israel is not inherently antisemitic. Supporting Palestinian liberation from apartheid and an end to the ongoing genocide does not equal support for Hamas's attack on Israeli civilians. These mischaracterizations of political dissent are a long-time tactic of anti-democratic groups, used to silence legitimate criticism of Israel, especially from Muslim, Black, and Brown people.

No government is above the law. War crimes, no matter by whom they are committed, are unjustifiable. To grant the Israeli government impunity from any criticism whatsoever will lead to disastrous humanitarian consequences all over the world—even here at Fordham.

We urge members of the Fordham community to not jump to conclusions that your colleagues support terrorism or antisemitism simply because they believe in an end to genocide and apartheid in Palestine. We implore our community to consider that people have families in Palestine in the same the way people have families in Israel. We ask, with broken hearts, that our community denounce the Israeli government's slaughter of Palestinian people. These are innocent people who never held the power to stop the violence in Israel. Still, these innocent people were annihilated by a government that does not distinguish between civilian and terrorist, equating both to “animals” ripe for slaughter.

We write to our community from a place of deep grief, despair over innocent lives lost, and importantly, an unwavering belief that we must speak truth to power because no one else at Fordham will speak for us and for Palestinian liberation.”