

From: [Carol Ann Desiderio](#)
To: [Jessica Slavin Connelly](#)
Subject: RE: Harassed and Scared in Malden
Date: Monday, June 3, 2024 11:10:00 AM

Thank you for contacting the Office of the City Clerk.
Your public comment has been received and is now attached to the history of Paper 271-24.
Regards,
Carol Ann Desiderio,
Malden City Clerk

From: Jessica Slavin Connelly <jessicaslavinconnelly@gmail.com>
Sent: Monday, June 3, 2024 10:09 AM
To: Carey McDonald <cmcdonald@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Karen Colón Hayes <kcolonhayes@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Jadeane Sica <jsica@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Stephen Winslow <swinslow@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Ryan O'Malley <romalley@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Paul Condon <pcondon@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Peg Crowe <pcrowe@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Craig Spadafora <cspadafora@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Chris Simonelli <csimonelli@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Ari Taylor <ataylor@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Amanda Linehan <alinehan@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>; Mayor Christenson <mayor@cityofmalden.org>; Carol Ann Desiderio <CDesiderio@CITYOFMALDEN.ORG>
Subject: Harassed and Scared in Malden

Dear Members of City Council,

I imagine you have received many letters regarding the Ceasefire Resolution Vote on Tomorrow's City Council Agenda. I respectfully and humbly ask for you to read one more, from me, about my personal experience here in Malden and in Israel before and since the October 7th Massacre.

I believe in all of you and am grateful for your incredibly hard work to support our entire Malden community, and hope to be of help in healing the divide.

Sincerely,

Jess Slavin Connelly
Ward 3
17 Corey Road
Malden MA 02148

Text inserted from attachment:

May 29, 2024

RE: Vote No on Ceasefire Resolution June 4

TO:

Malden City Council

Malden City Hall

215 Pleasant Street

Malden, MA 02148

Dear Members of the Malden City Council,

The situation in Israel and Gaza is causing immense suffering for all those directly impacted, including myself, my family, and friends in Israel, which includes Muslim, Christian, Bedouin, Druze, Palestinian, Israeli, and Jewish Citizens. Here in the U.S. and around the world, the ripple effects of division and hatred fueled by misinformation, particularly against the Jewish People worldwide have been devastating. Here in Malden, the entire situation has been devastating for all communities directly impacted.

I am respectfully asking you to vote against the ceasefire resolution proposed by Councilor Karen Colon Hayes, as any ceasefire resolution that does not explicitly demand Hamas to immediately release all living and dead hostages and immediately surrender, does not adequately address the complexities and serious consequences associated with this conflict. It also does nothing anything to protect all citizens of Malden from hate speech, bullying, intimidation, and antisemitic rhetoric and actions that are frightening and dividing our city's residents.

The stated goal in the Hamas Charter is to exterminate the Jewish people worldwide. Those who call 'From the river to the sea, Palestine will be free' are knowingly or unknowingly calling for the destruction of The State of Israel. Those calling for intifada are knowingly or unknowingly calling for a violent ongoing attack on all Israeli Citizens, an attack I lived through during the First and Second Intifadas and had many in my community murdered on blown up buses and in the markets.

Those advocating for a ceasefire resolution fail to recognize that this Islamic terrorist

group along with its jihadist partners have effectively held their own people in Gaza hostage and indoctrinated against the Jewish People for over 18 years. They fail to realize that Muslims and Palestinians and people from many countries and faith traditions were murdered and tortured indiscriminately on October 7th, 2023. They fail to recognize the rejection by Hamas of countless ceasefire agreements offered at a great loss for Israel since October 7th. They refuse to acknowledge the inhumanity of what happened on October 7th, and the torture and weaponized sexual violence, and slavery the hostages have endured.

Equating innocent hostages held by Hamas, as young as 1 year old and as old as 86, whose 'crime' was being alive in Israel on October 7, with convicted individuals referred to as 'detainees'—individuals charged with and convicted of crimes including murder and terrorism—shows a deep lack of understanding of the situation.

I am coming to you with my pain and fear. I have been living in Malden as an active member of the community since 2011. I am a lifelong Jewish Educator, Social Worker, and Former Interfaith Youth Leadership Facilitator for The New England Anti-Defamation League, where I worked for 6 years with Christian, Muslim, and Jewish students and faith leaders on interfaith understanding and social justice initiatives. I am a member of the Malden Historic District Study Committee. I founded the Malden Young Families Facebook group and moderated it daily for 12 years to ensure it remained a useful safe, respectful, and kind space for all. I am an annual host for the Malden Porchfest City Wide Celebration of Music. I was asked to speak at Malden Pride last year representing the Jewish Community as part of an interfaith community service. I have donated to, supported, and attended events sponsored by the Muslim community in our city and area. I initiated the idea of having a community Hanukkah celebration in Malden during a time when antisemitism was escalating exponentially. I believed it would be beneficial for everyone to share in each other's traditions. I hoped that this event would bring people from all walks together to discuss, learn, and most importantly, celebrate, adding to the fabric of celebration of all cultures and backgrounds in Malden.

One of the things I have always loved about Malden is that it reminds me of Israel. In Malden, you can't turn your head without seeing someone from a background or with a perspective different from one's own—a kaleidoscope of humanity living together in a community, with incredible opportunities to learn from one another, and engaged residents committed to those initiatives. But since the October 7th Massacre, antisemitism locally and across the United States has escalated beyond imagination, and darkness and hatred have taken over in Malden.

I have been living in agony and fear since the October 7th Massacre since my family and friends were murdered and taken hostage. My father has lived in Jerusalem half time for over 20 years with his Israeli partner, a child of Holocaust survivors, and my step siblings and their children. My cousins live in the South near Be'er Sheva, Sdorot, and Tel Aviv, and in areas under constant rocket fire since Israel withdrew from Gaza completely in 2005. My friends include members of Kibbutz Nir Oz, Kibbutz Magen, Kibbutz Be'eri, Kibbutz Nachal Oz, Kibbutz Kfar Azza, and many other communities who were butchered and burnt down on October 7th. My other family members live in the North, some in Haifa, some near the border where hundreds of thousands have been evacuated from due to heavy Hezbollah (another related terrorist organization) bombing and rocket fire. And I have hundreds of friends from my Jewish life all over the country.

On Oct 7th I woke up to my phone, buzzing off the hook, from friends and family alerting me that something terrible was happening, they were in their safe rooms, there was no information, everything was confusing. I was on the phone with a friend who were receiving reports of rapes and murders in real time through live videos posted by Hamas on Telegram and Facebook. My step brother was on the phone for 7 hours with his best friend in one of the villages whose only protection from terrorists trying to break into the safe room to murder his family and young children was himself holding the door.

My life stopped. It took weeks to determine the status of everyone I knew in the fog of war. For many others it's taken months, and for the hostages we are left with psychological warfare videos or complete silence concerning their welfare.

My dear friend of over 30 years, Ayelet Shachar-Epstein is a lifelong resident of the Peace Activist community of Kibbutz Kfar Azza. They had many Gazan friends and partners who they considered to be family. I met her and others while working and living in the community. Ayelet lost her 23 year old son, Netta, who in his safe room jumped on a grenade he couldn't catch to save his 22 year old fiance, Irene. She had to hide behind his destroyed body for 6 hours before being rescued. Netta and the others in the young people's living area were some of the first to be murdered in the Massacre. Their entire area was burnt and destroyed. My friend's 81 year old Mother-In-Law, 2 brothers-in-law, and nephew were also murdered, as well as her best friends and their families who were tortured and burnt alive in their homes. Many were taken hostage. My friend almost died rescuing her father-in-law. My friend and her family were rescued after 30 excruciating hours from their safe room. The Kibbutz is rubble. Maps of the Kibbutz were found on Hamas operatives that could only have been obtained by Gazans who were intimately knowledgeable about the details of the Kibbutz, Gazans who were long time friends.

This is just one story of thousands. I personally know too many friends and family whose loved ones were butchered, burnt alive, raped, and kidnapped, many filmed by Hamas. Hersh Polin-Goldberg, an American-Israeli Citizen, is my Nephew's best friend's first cousin and role model. And my best friend's son's dear camp friend. Hersh was hiding in a bomb shelter with approximately 30-35 others, out of which only 7 survived. His arm was blown off and he can be seen in video both inside the bomb shelter and being thrown into a truck with other captives. In March, I stood inside that bomb shelter and wept. This is just one of countless stories of people I know in Israel.

I went to Israel in March to bear witness and volunteer with the grieving and displaced communities. I sat with the families of those murdered at the Nova Festival at the site of the festival, with the look on their faces of the half dead, who had camped out there for 6 months because their lives were over. I visited Hostage Square with my cousin, whose sister, a math teacher, has been marching with thousands in weekly progressive democratic demonstrations for government reform for the past 2 years. I participated in a Bring Them Home Demonstration led by Hersh's dad in a march to the President's house. I observed Palestinian Muslims observing Ramadan in East Jerusalem, walking back from the mosque in the thousands, while Orthodox Religious Jews stood quietly on the side with their eyes down out of respect, holding baskets overflowing with dates to break the fast, which were accepted by many worshippers with a nod as they returned to their homes. I saw my Israeli Arab friends who cried with me. I prayed for the grieving and the utterly broken and for peace and reconciliation at the Western Wall. I was there.

While there are as many different opinions as there are people in Israel, no one I spoke to or know wants this war. We want the hostages returned, we are desperate for them to return, and until that happens, every day is October 7th.

Here in Malden, since the massacre and kidnapping of my friends and family and their friends and families on October 7, while going through on-going daily trauma with friends dead and held hostage, I have been ostracized, dismissed, ignored, insulted, bullied, stalked, threatened, harassed, publicly named, doxxed online, named in a FOIA as an act of intimidation by the Massachusetts Teachers Association, been told by people who aren't Jewish what is and isn't antisemitism, and slandered. My professional career was threatened, supported by a candidate for my ward's state representative. A video out of context of me at our home filmed by a member of that campaign and the Malden for Palestine group remains online for anyone to see and locate and identify my house and family. All this was for respectfully speaking about my fears of antisemitism and hatred and bullying in our schools at a School Committee meeting in January. Since October 7th, I have been abandoned by those I have always walked with as allies against hate,

and for social justice, and humanity.

Thankfully, in 2022, the City of Malden adopted the International Holocaust Remembrance Association Definition of Antisemitism, and Malden City Council unanimously voted in favor of a resolution standing against antisemitism, I believe sponsored by Councilor Hayes. I am asking you to review and stand by that resolution.

I am asking you to put aside your politics and personal conflicts and stand together to stand up against all hatred in our entire community. For me, and the Jewish People around the world, what you do here affects our lives and existence as a people. If our City of Malden truly stands against antisemitism and Islamophobia, and hatred of all kinds, then I dearly hope you will draft a resolution that calls for Malden to be a place that stands against hate and bullying unequivocally. You can protect us all and support initiatives that help us to come together to acknowledge all of the pain our collective community has been experiencing and stand against hate in our city. I believe that you and all of us in Malden can be leaders in hearing each other and healing.

In conclusion, I strongly urge you to vote against any ceasefire resolution, as there is no way to word one that will make everyone affected in Malden feel safe and acknowledged. Supporting this kind of resolution would inadvertently contribute to a narrative that does not promote peace but rather deepens divisions and hatred and endangers lives here in Malden.

I ask you, our City Council, to cast your vote on this ceasefire resolution based on the facts of a horribly complex situation, rather than opinion or fear of being judged or bullied or misunderstood. If you are not sure if you have all the facts or know enough about the history and geopolitics of this conflict, I hope you will consider whether the Council as a whole has the knowledge and jurisdiction to do so.

We must stand against hatred and bias of all kinds in our community of Malden.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica

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