

Good evening Mayor and council members,

My name is Kamala Brown and I am on the board of Congregation Ner Shalom here in Cotati, although I am only speaking for myself tonight. I love the Jewish people and am deeply committed to Jewish spiritual practice for myself and my family. In fact, my twins are having their B'nai Mitzvah at the end of the month. I say this because I want it to be clear that my love and connection to the Jewish people, my people, is lifelong and very deep. I have Israeli friends and family and have visited Israel a number of times.

I believe in Israel's right to exist and even to defend itself. I believe that Israel deserves a secure future. I also believe that Palestinian lives matter and that the Palestinian people deserve a secure future full of self-determination and opportunities for their children. The unimaginable loss of life, especially of children, that the Israeli government is waging in Gaza right now and the general humanitarian crisis cannot, in my opinion, be categorized as Israel defending itself. And, in my opinion, it does not make Israel safer or Jews in the diaspora safer either.

I believe that the only way forward for the safety and security and futures of everyone in the region is an immediate bilateral ceasefire and a resolution to the conflict based on diplomacy. We all know that this is something that is easy to say, especially from relative safety here in the U.S. But, I think we must at least say it. I understand that a resolution coming from the City Council is essentially just a statement and does not hold any binding power as local governments are not involved in international politics but I think a statement is worth something and if enough local governments make statements, our national government is more likely to listen.

I urge you to pass the ceasefire resolution before you.

There are 7 million Jews in Israel and close to 7 million Palestinians in Israel, Gaza and the West Bank. None of those people are going anywhere. They have nowhere else to go. Ultimately, the only way forward is together in some fashion or another and the longer this war continues and the more people are killed, the harder and harder that future becomes.

Thank you for your time and consideration,  
Kamala Brown