

November 26, 2023

In response to the recent pro-Palestinian protest on Nantucket, Congregation Shirat HaYam issued the statement below. Any media inquiries should be directed to shayam@comcast.net.

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We represent the leadership of Shirat HaYam, Nantucket's synagogue for 40 years. We believe in the necessity of a safe and secure Jewish homeland. Israel, the only democracy in the Middle East and principal ally of the United States in the region, has fulfilled that role since its founding in 1948.

Israel's security was threatened on October 7th, when Hamas violated the ceasefire then in effect, launched an attack against Israel that killed 1,400 people -- the vast majority of whom were civilians -- raped and tortured others, and took over 200 more civilians hostage, all in violation of international law. Israel now faces one of its greatest threats to survival. Israel has the right and the obligation to respond to Hamas' terrorist assault with military action.

Israel unilaterally withdrew all forces and civilians from Gaza in 2006. Israel then turned over Gaza to the Palestinians, with a functioning infrastructure, including viable agricultural resources. In 2007, the Hamas violently seized power in Gaza. Under Hamas, parts of Gaza were leveled to the ground, and Hamas' destructive goals undermined the safety and future of Gazan Palestinians. In further violation of international law, Hamas based rockets in nursery schools and hospitals and launched those rockets against Israeli civilians, using Palestinian citizens as human shields. Hamas has explicitly stated its objective to destroy Israel and continue its attacks on Israeli civilians.

Calls for a permanent ceasefire at this point are misguided. There was a ceasefire in effect prior to Hamas' horrific attack on Israel on October 7th. Israel cannot cease fire while Hamas still holds hostages.

We are grateful for the efforts the United States government has made to support Israel and secure the release of hostages taken on October 7th. And we are grateful to live in a country that values free speech and expression.

We hope that a peaceful solution can be reached with all Palestinians, but there can be no long-term peace in the region -- and no better future for Palestinians -- while Gaza is under Hamas' leadership. We hope for the day when a responsible Palestinian leadership will emerge that can guide a negotiated peace with Israel, so that Palestinians can live in stability and peace with their neighbors.

We mourn the loss of every innocent life and pray for the safe return of all of the remaining hostages. We ask the entire community to join with us in prayers for peace.

Congregation Shirat HaYam

Chuck Shoneman
President

Rabbi Gary Bretton- Granatoor