

Dear Town Meeting Members,
Please find below David Fleig's testimony to the Select Board on April 24, 2024 as a co-proponent of STM's Ceasefire Resolution.

Elizabeth Dray
TMM Pct 10

Hello.

My name is David Fleig. I have been a resident of Arlington for 14 years. I stand here today in support of Arlington passing a ceasefire resolution. It is my hope that the Select Board will represent the overwhelming majority of Arlington citizens who want the release of all the hostages, an end to the killing, and a diplomatic solution to the conflict based on international Law. Here in Arlington I have seen the movement for peace in Palestine and Israel grow from a handful of people to hundreds. While I am hopeful that the Select Board will stand for the moral character of our town and the value of liberty and justice for all I am also aware that there is a chance you will choose not to.

I am Jewish. My family came to America fleeing the pogroms. I was the President of Hillel at my college. I majored in comparative religion focusing on the similarities between Jewish philosophy and Confucianism. I believe in the Ten Commandments.

2) You shall not make for yourself an idol, whether in the form of anything that is in heaven above, or that is on the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth

6) You shall not murder.

9) You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor.

10) You shall not covet your neighbor's house; or anything that belongs to your neighbor

I am neither more or less Jewish than any one here. No one person can speak for every Jew. We are a diverse group, liberal & conservative, socialist & capitalist, rich & poor, atheist & religious. There is nothing that supports antisemitism more than the idea that Jews are all the same.

Every rally I have been to I have been there with other Jews. In Arlington there are members of Jewish Voices for Peace, If Not Now, and Arlington for Palestine. During the listening sessions roughly 1/3 of the people speaking in support were Jewish, including several Israeli Jews. Recently The Progressive Israel Network which represents Americans for Peace Now, J Street, New Israel Fund, New York Jewish Agenda, Partners for Progressive Israel, Reconstructing Judaism, and T'ruah: The Rabbinic Call for Human Rights in addition to many other groups issued a letter to President Biden calling for a ceasefire. Part of which I want to quote

We firmly believe that there is no military solution to this conflict; the only future for Israelis and Palestinians is a shared future; and we must raise up, not shut down, our shared humanity in this moment.

There are certainly Jews who believe that Israel should continue killing Palestinians in Gaza. I cannot deny their existence. There are also Jews, and I am one of them, who believe that Human Rights are universal, that the lives of Palestinians are of equal value to those of anyone

else, that what we are witnessing in Gaza is a moral catastrophe, and it must stop now. No one can deny that we also exist. We are real, our voices also matter, and we must not be silenced.

If the Select Board opts not to endorse the warrant article, one thing must be clear. That decision must not be blamed on the Jewish community. Do not lay that burden at our feet for we will not carry it for you. That failure, that legacy, must be yours and yours alone.

There are two fundamental questions before the Select Board. Is a negotiated ceasefire the right course of action, and is it proper for our Town to take a stand on this question.

On the question of a ceasefire there are three possible paths that any conflict can take. It can never be resolved. It can be resolved diplomatically. It can be resolved by the annihilation of one of the groups. David Ben Gurion said, "the old will die, and the young will forget." This has proven to not be the case. Neither the Jews nor the Palestinians are going to go away. We cannot support the idea of the extermination of either of these groups. That leaves us with a solution where the two sides learn to compromise and live together on the basis of international law and universal human rights. This is only possible with a permanent ceasefire and the release of all the hostages.

To the question of whether this conflict is relevant to our community, the answer can only be yes. Our tax money goes both to fund the weapons and the humanitarian relief. Our soldiers have died and will die in greater numbers if the conflict spreads. Our family members are killed or at risk in this war. Our values and the values that we pass on to our children are reflected by the actions we take in respect to what is happening. The algorithm, "where's Daddy" that uses facial recognition software from social media and uploads that into an automated kill list executed by drones is currently being marketed to other countries around the world. The data for this program comes from American companies founded in Massachusetts.

If we cannot take a stand on this conflict, tell me where is the border where our humanity ends. Can we talk about Lexington, or is that too far? Massachusetts? New England? Our Country? Would we say that we can't take a stand on slavery because that happened in the south? Do we tell the Native Americans that we can't talk about their rights? Would we stand silent during the Holocaust? Where do we tell our children our values end? I know that for me, my family and the community I know and love in Arlington we recognize the value of life, liberty and the pursuit of happiness for all, I hope the Select Board will do the same.

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