Statement by Non-Governmental Organizations on President Trump's Recent Statements Endorsing the Ethnic Cleansing of Palestinians in Gaza

We are deeply alarmed by President Trump's recent statements that appear to endorse and plan for forced Palestinian displacement leading to the ethnic cleansing of the Gaza Strip. On January 25th, Trump stated "I would like Egypt to take people… You're talking about probably a million and a half people, and we just clean out that whole thing and say: 'You know, it's over.'" He also said that he had informed King Abdullah of Jordan that "I would love for you to take on more, 'cause I am looking at the whole Gaza Strip right now, and it's a mess. It's a real mess.'" On the same day, responding to questions from reporters on whether Egypt and Jordan would comply with such a request, he stated "They will do it. They will do it. They're going to do it, okay? We do a lot for them, and they're going to do it." Then, on February 4th in a joint press conference with Israeli Prime Minister Netanyahu, Trump said that the forced displacement of Palestinians from Gaza should be "permanent," and announced a "long-term ownership position" for the United States.

We, the undersigned organizations, decry and oppose any effort or initiative, and any calls for, the forcible displacement of Palestinians from Gaza, and support the Joint Statement of Egypt, Jordan, Saudi Arabia, the United Arab Emirates, Qatar, the Palestinian Authority and the Arab League that similarly rejected any such steps. The forcible displacement of civilians is a violation of international humanitarian law, including under Article 49(1) of the Fourth Geneva Convention, to which both the U.S. and Israel are party, and which states (emphasis added):

> *Individual or mass forcible transfers, as well as deportations of protected persons from occupied territory to the territory of the Occupying Power or to that of any other country, occupied or not, are prohibited, regardless of their motive.*

Forcible displacement, when carried out with an intent to permanently remove a people from a land on the basis of their identity is ethnic cleansing.

Gaza is an ancient and historic Palestinian city, and the Gaza Strip itself became one of the most densely populated areas on earth precisely because of the ethnic cleansing that occurred in Palestine in 1948 (the *Nakba*), and 80% of Gaza's population are themselves refugees or descendants of refugees from the Nakba. Since 2006 it has been in a state of siege, its people have undergone repeated bombardment and restrictions on basic necessities including food, water, and medicine. Since October 2023, it has been the locus of what experts have called the most intense bombardment since the firebombing of Dresden, resulting in what both academic experts, United Nations experts, and even a U.S. federal judge have found to be a plausible case of genocide.

Through this all, the Palestinians in Gaza have stood with remarkable dignity and perseverance, insisting throughout the immense suffering and loss that they will never abandon their homeland.

We are deeply concerned by clear statements of intent from Israeli government officials over the past year concerning the creation of new Israeli settlements within the Gaza Strip, which further reinforce the intent of ethnic cleansing, and note that outgoing IDF Chief of Staff Halevi has stated that Palestinians in Gaza "can exit through the Rafah Crossing into Egypt, but only one way and they cannot return to Gaza…"

U.S. Middle East Envoy Stephen Witkoff was by some measures correct when he said, upon a visit to Gaza in late January, that it is "inescapable" that "there is almost nothing left of Gaza." But he was also wrong: the heart and soul of Gaza is retained in its people, and for as long as that strength of spirit endures, Gaza lives.

The United States has no right to dictate to the Palestinian people in Gaza to leave, and direct other countries to participate in their displacement. We are also aware that even a temporary external displacement could be used by Israel to enact permanent exile. While we agree that the short and medium-term humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza may be difficult to meet given the nearly complete destruction that Israel has wrought, if the necessary services cannot be provided in Gaza, the people of Gaza must be able to access them elsewhere within the historic borders of Palestine and must be able to return.

We are also extremely alarmed by an uptick in settler violence and IDF operations in the West Bank that have resulted in scores of Palestinian casualties. These actions are part and parcel of a strategy that seeks to make not just Gaza, but all Palestinian areas across historic Palestine, unlivable for the Palestinian people, and are thus contributory to a process of ethnic cleansing.

Palestine is not just an idea - it is a place. It is a homeland to the Palestinian people. To participate in, facilitate, or endorse their removal from it would violate every precept of international law, devastate the rules-based international order that protects us all, do irreversible harm to America's global influence, and be an act of unconscionable immorality.

As Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish wrote,

My country is not a suitcase
I am not a traveler
I am the lover and the land is the beloved.

The archaeologist is busy analyzing stones.
In the rubble of legends he searches for his own eyes
to show
that I am a sightless vagrant on the road
with not one letter in civilization's alphabet.
Meanwhile in my own time I plant my trees.
I sing of my love.

Date: Monday, 10 February 2025

Signed:

A New Policy
Friends Committee on National Legislation

US & International Organizations
1040 for Peace
99 Coalition
Action Corps
ActionAid USA
Al-Awda PRRC
Alliance of Baptists
AMEEN Action
American Friends Service Committee (AFSC)
Americans for Justice in Palestine Action
Animal Healthcare Workers Against Genocide
Arab Americans 4Ward
Arab Youth Union
Bangladeshi-Americans for Political Progress
CAIR Action
Center for Jewish Nonviolence
Center For Nonviolent Solutions
Center for Security, Race and Rights
Charity & Security Network
Churches for Middle East Peace
CODEPINK
CommonDefense.us
Community Alliance for Peace and Justice
Council on American-Islamic Relations
Counter Coalition
DAWN
Demand Progress Education Fund
Democratic Socialists of America
Doctors Against Genocide
Eisenhower Media Network
Episcopal Peace Fellowship Palestine Israel Network
Faith Strategies, LLC
Franciscan Action Network
Friends of Sabeel North America (FOSNA)
Global Ministries of the Christian Church (Disciples of Christ) and United Church of Christ
Help Fund Gaza
HuMENA for Human Rights and Civic Engagement
IMEU Policy Project
IfNotNow Movement
Institute for Policy Studies New Internationalism Project
Jewish Voice for Peace Action
Just Foreign Policy
MADRE

Medical Mission Sisters, Justice Office
Mennonite Central Committee U.S.
Middle East Democracy Center (MEDC)
Middle East Justice and Peace Group of South Central PA
Migrant Roots Media
MPower Change Action Fund
Muslim Civic Coalition
Muslim Visionaries
National Iranian American Council
Nonviolence International (USA)
Oil Change International
Ollin Women International
Palestine Education Network
Palestine Justice Network of the Presbyterian Church (U.S.A.)
Palestine Shield Initiative (PALSHIELD)
Palestinian Christians for Justice
Partners for Palestine
PAX
Pax Christi USA
Pax Christi Young Adult Caucus
Peace Action
Peace, Justice, Sustainability, NOW!
Physicians for Humanity
POLIFA
Progressive Democrats of America - Middle East Alliances
Progressive Democrats of America (PDA)
Project TAHA
Resignees from Biden Admin over Gaza
ReThinking Foreign Policy
RootsAction
September 11 Families for Peaceful Tomorrows
Sisters of Mercy of the Americas - Justice Team
Society of Helpers
Terre des Hommes Italy
The American Federation of Ramallah Palestine
The Oakland Institute
The Rights Forum
Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East
United Church of Christ
United Church of Christ Palestine Israel Network
United Methodists for Kairos Response (UMKR)
UNRWA USA National Committee
US Campaign for Palestinian Rights (USCPR)
Vote for Peace PAC
Washington Report on Middle East Affairs
Women's Alliance for Theology, Ethics, and Ritual (WATER)
World BEYOND War
Yemen Relief and Reconstruction Foundation

Local Organizations
Ann Arbor Friends Meeting

Atlanta Multifaith Coalition for Palestine
Berkeley Fellowship of Unitarian Universalists
Brooklyn for Peace
Carolina Peace Center
Chicago Faith Coalition on Middle East Policy
Granny Peace Brigade Philadelphia
Green-Rainbow Party Southeast Chapter
Indiana Center for Middle East Peace
MARUF CT (Muslim Advocacy for Rights, Unity, and Fairness)
Massachusetts Peace Action
M.E. Justice and Peace Group of S. Central PA
Mill Creek Friends Meeting
Minnesota Peace Project
Mississippi for a Just World
New Hampshire Coalition for a Just Peace in the Middle East
New Hampshire Council of Churches
NH Peace Action
NH Veterans For Peace
Northshore For Palestine
Palestine Taskforce California Nevada Conference United Methodist Church
Pax Christi Michigan
Pax Christi New York State
Peace Action of San Mateo County
Peace Action Wisconsin
Pennsylvania Progressive Democrats of America PDA-PA
Religious of the Sacred Heart of Mary, Western American Area
Showing Up for Racial Justice Bay Area
Shut Down Indian Point NOW!
Smedley Veterans for Peace
The Florida Peace and Justice Alliance