

LGBT Community Center Employees Statement in Solidarity with Palestine

January 25th, 2024

As employees of the LGBT Community Center and believers in its mission and values, we come together in unequivocal solidarity with the Palestinian people, and we grieve the multiple thousands of Palestinian lives lost as we continue to witness genocide unfold. We also join the growing chorus of voices demanding a ceasefire now. Our organization's values indicate that we "strive for The Center to always be a safe space of refuge from an unjust world" and our mission statement dedicates our work to "disrupt[ing] the systemic racism, sexism, and economic injustices keeping BIPOC, gender nonconforming, and poor people from living healthy and successful lives." But how can we fight oppression and claim to be a safe space or refuge if we do not first call out what we know to be unjust?

When thinking about The Center and who we claim to serve, does this not include Palestinian people? Within our organization, we have talked about who is considered our "centered communities" and at the core of those discussed are marginalized and historically oppressed people. To fulfill that mission, we believe we must demonstrate our solidarity with LGBTQ members of the Palestinian community (here in NYC and worldwide) and denounce the ongoing genocide in Gaza and the escalating violence in the West Bank. We stand with Palestinians for the same reason we stand with Black trans women, migrant communities, working-class people, and all oppressed people because none of us are free until we are all free. As workers and believers in the Centers' values we believe just as much in Palestinian liberation and indigenous sovereignty as we do in combating antisemitism and championing Black Liberation globally, Queer and Trans Liberation, Disability Justice, and Gender Justice.

The intersection of Muslim and Queer identities is celebrated annually in the Center's Iftar event. This event's inception took place in response to the Muslim ban enacted by the Trump administration in 2016 and has only continued to grow. The Center's Iftar is rooted in giving our Muslim community members a safe space to celebrate the holy month of Ramadan while uplifting their multiple identities and backgrounds. Since its start, Palestinian readings, performances, and artwork have been an invaluable part of this event. How can we hold this Iftar dinner and ignore the voices and experiences of so many of its attendees? We also recognize that expressing this solidarity is a form of reparations that we owe to our queer Palestinian community members after the blatant discrimination they experienced at [The Center in 2011](#).

As Islamophobia continues to dominate media coverage and political discourse it is now once again our duty to live up to The Center's values, and extend a hand of solidarity, allyship, and safety to our community members, especially queer Palestinians. By standing together now, we form bonds to show each other compassion and form pathways forward. Because solidarity is not transactional, and silence is complicity.

We also must denounce Israel's use of [pinkwashing](#) as a racist and cynical ploy to divert attention from the relentless oppression of Palestinians. At the heart of such propaganda is the idea that Israel is more culturally advanced than Palestine and therefore somehow justified in its destruction of Gaza and countless other atrocities. This type of racist and colonial mindset requires the complete denial of Palestinian LGBTQ+ identities and experiences. Any institution that claims to support our community should stand in defense of LGBTQ+ Palestinians and against their erasure, both figuratively and literally as they face unimaginable violence from Israel.

We also recognize the historic nature of the current catastrophe in Gaza. Typically, the degree of violence and the true scope of genocide does not become widely known until after the fact. This is likely the first time that genocide has been livestreamed on social media as its perpetrators proudly boast about their atrocities while signaling their intent to pursue further ethnic cleansing. We cannot claim ignorance or look away, especially from the fundamental role that the United States plays in funding and supporting the Israeli military. Preventing genocide or any atrocity is an issue of universal importance, but as civic leaders and proponents of human rights who live and pay taxes in the United States, we have an even greater moral responsibility to speak out and demand a ceasefire now.

We acknowledge that since the October 7th attack, Islamophobia and antisemitism have been on the rise. We, as workers, are dedicated to making our community space a safer place for ALL impacted by this ongoing exposure to grief and loss. Our care is never meant to be exclusionary. As people who do not rely on binaries—this conversation is not binary either.

Condemning Israel's ongoing ethnic cleansing does not mean we condone antisemitism. We unequivocally stand against and condemn Islamophobia and antisemitism full stop. If our organization's mission includes human rights, justice, and equality, how can we sit idly by? How can we claim to be a space of healing and understanding if we ignore large parts of our community? How can we call for more funding for public services critical to our communities when we turn a blind eye to our government spending billions to arm Israel?

Progressive organizations often invoke the threat of a backlash to justify remaining silent about Palestine, but we have now crossed a milestone as we experience a consciousness shifting event that demands response. We cannot claim to stand for human rights, social justice, and dignity for all if we sit on our hands when it comes to the lives of Palestinians.

As nonprofits, our mission is to create a better world—not to exist in perpetuity while injustice prevails all around us. If the “arc of the moral universe is long, but it bends toward justice” and we fail to condemn Israel’s genocide against Gaza, history will pass the harshest judgment on us.

SIGNATURES (115):

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Brittany Butler
Brittany M
Bushra Rehman
Camila Rueda
Cai Sherley
Casper Capers
Charlie Kerr
Christian Kamongi
Cornelius Wiggins
Courtney Virginia Fox
Daniel Rich
Dawn Dawson
Demetri Sofides
Devlyn Camp
E Alvarez
Eliot Cetta
Elliot Chamberlain
Eliza Milliken
Eric Mascara
Eve Hammerle
Evrisha Clark
Fernanda Andia
Genna Ayres
Ghiselli Alcantar

Gilberto Alvarado
Greg Newton
Gustavo Carlos
Hannah Plumb
Helen Buse
Huck Hyzy
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Kika Naranjo
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Lady Parada
Lauren Galloway
Leanne Bazzetta
Lindsey Hennawi
Lou McCarthy
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Leora Fuller
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