



California Council on Teacher Education

Statement of the Board of Directors of the California Council on Teacher Education Regarding Human Rights Violations in the Middle East Approved October 18, 2023

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The California Council on Teacher Education (CCTE) Board of Directors acknowledges the devastating and dehumanizing loss that is taking place currently in Israel and Gaza. We collectively mourn the loss of innocent Israeli and Palestinian lives, denouncing both the actions of Hamas and the planned invasion of Gaza by the Israeli government. These actions are both unacceptable acts of violence sourced by dehumanization that resulted in inexcusable loss of innocent lives. For the Jewish-Israeli community, the Hamas attack constituted the largest mass killing of Jewish people in a single day since the Holocaust, with at least 1400 Israelis killed including 1100 civilians. Many families still do not know the fate of some family members who are unaccounted for or who have been taken hostage. The Israeli government's subsequent response to these attacks has led to over 2,800 Palestinian civilian deaths including 700 children. These attacks continue to escalate at the time of this statement. In the latest attacks, [white phosphorous](#), which causes often fatal and incredibly painful chemical burning has been used in densely populated areas of Gaza. Nearly half of all Gazans are children, under 18, and children are particularly vulnerable to the effects of white phosphorous. As Israel calls for "immediate evacuations" of Northern Gaza in preparation for ground attacks, the United Nations highlights the "devastating humanitarian consequences" of the current forced evacuation of over 1.1 million people from the Northern areas of Gaza, a move that the World Health Organization calls a "death sentence." According to the [Associated Press](#), 2.3 million people in Gaza do not currently have access to essential services including clean, running water and electricity.

The devastation of these attacks has set forth ripple effects that touch both U.S. Jewish communities and U.S. Palestinian communities, many of whom have close ties to family members and friends in the region. There has been a rise in both anti-Semitism and anti-Arab sentiment in the United States, with violent consequences, including death threats to pro-Palestinian protesters and the death of a 6-year-old child and serious injury to his mother in an anti-Muslim hate crime in the greater Chicago area. While we stand against all injustice and grieve all innocent lives lost, we acknowledge the deeply rooted histories behind the Israeli-Palestinian conflict and the disproportionate impact that these histories and the current situation have on the Palestinian people and the Palestinian diaspora globally, including in the US and California, an impact which has been cumulative over 56 years and which is acutely devastating in this moment as multiple generations of families are being killed in the attacks on civilians in Gaza.

These events in Gaza come also at the one-year anniversary mark of the death of Mahsa Jina Amini, a 22-year-old Kurdish woman who was taken into custody by the "Morality Police" for not properly wearing her hijab and was murdered at the hands of authorities in Iran. As a result of Mahsa Amini's death, a movement has been taking place in Iran that has largely been led by young women. This event triggered massive demonstrations around the world for freedom and life for the women of Iran. The public outcry and peaceful protests in Iran have been met with violence with many individuals being killed in these protests. Over 500 individuals have been killed and thousands unjustly imprisoned in Iran. Ongoing tear gas and chemical gas attacks have been targeting schools for girls in Iran. The oppression and control of women, children, and their allies occurs daily in Iran. Human rights violations in Iran have been ongoing for decades. This [bill](#) from August 2022 documents and acknowledges the persecution and denial of access to higher education for students who identify themselves as Baha'i, the largest religious minority in Iran. [The Baha'is of Iran](#) have been killed, imprisoned, or denied basic human rights for the last century. The United Nations has

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consistently condemned these long-standing violations of basic human rights. These unjust and inhumane practices of the Islamic Republic of Iran must stop.

Injustice anywhere diminishes us all as humans, beyond borders, labels, and creeds. As educators we have dedicated our lives to support education and students from various backgrounds, and this desire extends to all countries in the world, including those in the middle east. Our work supports democracy, access, inclusion, basic freedom and human rights, which are aspirations for humankind across nationalities. CCTE strongly condemns all ongoing situations of violence that target innocent families, particularly those focused on taking basic human rights from women, children, and girls. CCTE honors social justice, equality, and inclusion by recognizing that oppression happens in complex, intersectional ways. We strive to achieve the ideal of a caring community with institutional commitments to equity, diversity, and inclusion and thus we recognize that the plight of those in the middle east is also ours, and ours to act upon and against.

CCTE encourages educators to find out more about and take action in regard to both of these conflicts.

Regarding Israel and Palestine:

- Support teachers in teaching about [Palestine](#) and the [Israeli Peace Movement](#)
- Share [resources to support youth](#) affected by the violence in Israel and Gaza
- Consider donating to a humanitarian organization like [Doctors without Borders](#) or the [UNRWA](#) which are providing direct on the ground support to those suffering in the attacks on Gaza.

Regarding Iran:

- Consider joining an ongoing coalition that has been formed by professors from around the world for [“Women, Life, Freedom”](#)
- Find out more about the [ongoing history of women’s rights in Iran](#)
- Learn and share about [what is happening in Iran](#) after the one year anniversary of Mahsa Jina Amini’s death:

Finally, in this time of ongoing global conflict in many areas of the world including Ukraine, Armenia-Azerbaijan, and Sudan, CCTE urges members to stay informed, to stay aware of trauma that many of our transnational, immigrant, refugee, and migrant students and their families may be facing, and to also take care of themselves during these very difficult times.

For questions or comments, please contact either:

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