

From: [REDACTED]
To: [City Council](#); [Mary](#) [REDACTED]
Subject: public comment for 2/20/2024 meeting
Date: Tuesday, February 20, 2024 7:07:12 PM

Dear Sebastopol City Council,

I'm the rabbi of the B'nai Israel Jewish Center in Petaluma which serves the Jewish community in Sonoma County, including Sebastopol where we have a number of members. As someone with 30 years of experience with interfaith dialogue and peace activism, particularly around the Israeli- Palestinian conflict, I am clear that so many of us want peace. This is a very complex conflict and there is deep disagreement about what has led to this conflict and what are the steps to resolve it. I'm personally heartbroken by the loss of life in Israel and Gaza and fully committed to peaceful coexistence for Israelis and Palestinians and both groups living in peace, dignity, security and justice in their shared historic homeland.

For too many Jews and Israelis, the term "ceasefire" has become a politically charged term implying that Israel is alone responsible for this horrible war, and should cease its efforts to free its hostages and defend itself. A "ceasefire" resolution is a one-sided statement and imbalanced approach as it does not address the actual two sides of the conflict: 1. Israel's attempts to free the hostages and disarm Hamas, and 2. Iran which actively arms and funds militants in Gaza, Lebanon, and Yemen who are firing missiles against Israeli civilians and US interests. Hamas uses the people of Gaza as human shields and attempts to maximize casualties on their own side - they must be defeated for there to be peace.

Those advocating for a ceasefire have been transparent in their agenda, which is to put pressure on our US federal government to limit or end financial and military support for Israel. Such actions will not bring peace. The only way forward is through all of the parties in the region to accept the rights of Israelis and Palestinians to live together by sharing or dividing this tiny land.

Please consider a city council resolution that instead calls for "peaceful coexistence", or a "humanitarian pause", or a "negotiated truce". Please understand the deep emotional impact that using the term "ceasefire" will have for many Jews and Israelis in Sebastopol and the region. I pledge to support and participate in any local attempts to find common ground between the local Jewish / Israeli community and Palestinians / Arabs / Muslims. By truly hearing the different narratives, we can find peace globally and locally.

Thanks for considering these concerns.

Rabbi Shalom Bochner's