



# US WOMEN'S CAUCUS

*Feminist Advocacy at the UN*

## **Statement on the War Between Hamas and Israel**

December 18, 2023

The US Women's Caucus wishes to express its horror and utter dismay at the violence and devastation in the Middle East that began with the terrorist assault of October 7. We condemn without reservation the brutal attack by Hamas and other militant groups on Israeli homes, families, and youthful concert-goers. We deplore the illegal taking of hostages and call for their immediate and unconditional release, including our American compatriots. We grieve especially for the vicious sexual attacks on women and girls before they were brutally executed. To be raped and murdered is every woman's most feared nightmare, and we mourn the women and girls murdered on October 7 in sisterly solidarity. They were innocent victims of an egregious, despicable form of gender-based violence.

We grieve also the thousands of Palestinian civilians who have been killed in the Israeli military retaliation on Gaza following the October 7 attack. We recognize the right of Israel to respond to the attack and to defend its people and territory. But we do not believe that right justifies the massive military assault on the civilian population of Gaza that has killed many thousands of people. We regret in particular the deaths of thousands of children and the deep psychological trauma experienced by child survivors. The effects of this war will endure for many decades in the hearts and memories of those innocent children.

Traditional principles of war distinguish between civilians and combatants and require proportionality in response to attack. We feel that these important principles of warfare have been violated by Hamas, the other Gaza terrorist groups, and the Israeli military alike. The tragic killing of three hostages by Israeli forces on December 15 underlines the acute risks of military assault in the midst of a dense civilian population.

We come to this conflict from the perspective of a feminist foreign policy that prioritizes peace, human rights, and gender equity. Peace does not come from the barrel of a gun. Peace comes only through intentional, persistent, unwavering efforts to build equitable relationships of mutual care and consideration among peoples and nations.

We believe that an immediate humanitarian ceasefire with ample aid assistance is a necessary prerequisite to alleviate suffering and build a durable peace. Peace talks must prioritize security, economic development, and human rights for all Israeli and Palestinian people. In line with UN protocols on Women, Peace, and Security, women must be represented as decision-makers and leaders in peace talks, reconstruction programs, and truth and reconciliation efforts. We believe that accountability for war crimes and other violations of international law is required to build an equitable and secure future. The October 7 sexual assaults and murders must be thoroughly investigated and documented, and the perpetrators must be identified where possible and held accountable in an international forum.

The Holy Land, stretching across Israel and Palestine, is treasured by millions of people of faith around the world - Jews, Christians, and Muslims - even when it is torn apart by hatred and violence. The US Women's Caucus has faith and trust in a hopeful future for Palestine and Israel. We believe that humanity can move beyond past bitterness and take brave steps into a more peaceful and just future. The children of Israel and Palestine deserve no less.

*US feminists collaborating to advance human rights and gender equity for women and girls worldwide*

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