

October 19, 2023

Dear BHS College Student,

I am writing to you with the recognition that it is a difficult time to be a Jewish student on America's college campuses as well as with the understanding that each of you no doubt sits someplace unique on the political spectrum of opinion and belief.

Nevertheless, I want to share with you my own personal perspective on the current crisis in Israel and Gaza as a progressive Zionist and someone who has lived in Israel for two years (however long ago) and who has visited more or less annually for over three decades, and who counts Israelis as both family and friends.

Hamas' atrocities on Simchat Torah simply cannot be justified or excused by Israel's occupation of the West Bank or by the blockade of Gaza. STOP

Celebrating Hamas' atrocities; blaming Israel for Hamas' atrocities; excusing Hamas' atrocities; keeping silent and failing to condemn Hamas' atrocities, are all morally wrong. STOP

Palestinian self-determination is absolutely essential. STOP

The Occupation and Blockade are real and ongoing injuries to the Palestinian people. STOP

Hamas is a terrorist organization founded on the principle of destroying all of Israel and murdering Israelis and Jews. STOP

Hamas is more interested in murdering Israelis and Jews than in acting for the well-being of Palestinians in Gaza. STOP

There can be no ceasefire while Hamas holds almost 200 hostages, including American citizens—men, women, children, infants, and elders. STOP

Israel has a responsibility to its citizens to incapacitate Hamas and prevent a similar future incursion from occurring. STOP

Israel has a responsibility to avoid as many civilian casualties and as much civilian suffering as possible. STOP

Indiscriminate attacks on Palestinians are wrong. STOP

Israelis are not Western colonialists. STOP

Jews have a verifiable three thousand-year history in and to the Land of Israel. STOP

Both Jews and Palestinians have legitimate claims and real histories in the land.

The only hope for peace is for Israelis and Palestinians to accept each other as neighbors in the region. STOP

These events are still ongoing and likely far from a conclusion.

It can be overwhelming and all-consuming to try to stay updated on events. I want to urge you to consider limiting your intake and processing of the news media regarding this crisis to once in the morning and once in the evening. Spend time talking with people who respect nuance and diverse opinions. Try to limit your use of social media.

I hope whatever your own stance and opinion you will know that I am a resource to you and that you will reach out to me.

Chizku, v'Imtzu v'Dirshu Shalom!

Be Strong, Resolute, and Seek A Lasting Peace, Serge

Rabbi Serge A. Lippe
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