

Memo

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Feb 20, 2024

CITY OF IRVINE
CITY MANAGER'S OFFICE

To: Oliver Chi, City Manager

From: Farrah Khan, Mayor *FK*
Larry Agran, Vice Mayor *LA*

Date: February 20, 2024

Re: Consideration of Local Action Items in Response to Current Mideast Crisis

On October 7, 2023, the decades-long Mideast conflict entered a new and terrible phase when Hamas terrorists initiated a murderous attack on Israel, killing 1,200 innocent people – men, women, and children – and taking 240 hostages back to Gaza. Days later, in retaliation, Israeli forces began a military attack on Gaza, including aerial bombardment, which has caused many tens of thousands of casualties – innocent Gazans killed, injured, orphaned – with nearly two million people rendered homeless.

While the war in the Mideast is thousands of miles from us in Orange County, California, nevertheless, the effects of this continuing war – with its shocking scale of violence and savagery – reverberate around the world. And it has had an outsized and painful impact on us right here in Irvine.

Specifically, many communities within Irvine have reported and publicly commented that they are feeling threatened and unsafe. We have heard reports that children are being harassed at Irvine schools based on their heritage, religion, attire, and their individual beliefs regarding the current war in the Mideast. And members of the broader Irvine community have reported similar toxic interactions.

When taking the entire situation into account, we have recognized that while there currently exists no combination of words which we can say that will satisfy all segments of our exceptionally diverse community, we believe there are specific things we can do – and should do – as a City to help make things better. Among the things we can do are these:

1. We can promote an understanding that our City will always provide safe spaces, including at City Hall, where we honor both in word and deed, the right of individuals to speak their minds and, in the words of

our Constitution, “peaceably assemble” and “petition their Government for a redress of grievances.”

2. We can work with Irvine school district officials – both in the Irvine Unified School District and the Tustin Unified School District – to ensure that our City-deployed staff, including School Resource Officers, and school district personnel are increasingly effective in promoting a school environment where all members of the school community are made to feel safe and respected at all times.
3. We can enlist human relations organizations of proven effectiveness – for example, Groundswell and the Interfaith Council – to initiate community meetings and dialogues that begin to bridge differences, promote respect, and repair relationships within our City.
4. We can prepare a City plan to facilitate humanitarian relief – including roles that can be played by private citizens, as well as Irvine businesses and major institutions – once a ceasefire is in place.

Please agendize this item for discussion and possible action at the February 27th meeting of the Irvine City Council.

cc: City Council
City Clerk
City Attorney