

July 5th, 2024

Comox Valley for Palestine
comoxvalley4palestine@gmail.com

Mayor Bob Wells and Council Members
City of Courtenay
830 Cliffe Avenue
Courtenay, BC V9N 2J7

Dear Mayor Wells and Council Members,

We are writing to you on behalf of Comox Valley for Palestine (CV4P) to express our profound disappointment and frustration with the City of Courtenay's handling of the escalating crisis in Gaza. We are now ten months into the devastating Israeli military operation that has resulted in the slaughter of over 40,000 Palestinian civilians. In this context, Courtenay Council's actions have been inadequate and dismissive, reflecting a troubling double standard and an undercurrent of racism.

On June 12th, Courtenay Council released a statement officially reiterating the Canadian federal government's calls for a ceasefire. While we appreciate the eventual acknowledgment of the crisis, this statement came far too late and only after persistent pressure from CV4P members. Moreover, Courtenay Council refused our request to present to them, thereby silencing grassroots community voices attempting to highlight the relevance of the Gaza genocide to the Comox Valley. The rationale offered for the refusal was that the matter was outside your jurisdiction, yet the very purpose of our presentation was to establish this crucial connection between global issues and local actions.

Courtenay Council's statement regrettably fails to address the genocide explicitly. Instead, it adopts a misleading stance of false equivalence, equating the systematic extermination of Palestinian civilians with the October 7th, 2023 attack by Hamas. This both-sides rhetoric is deeply problematic and emblematic of anti-Palestinian racism. It is notable that Courtenay did not hesitate to waive rental fees for a Ukraine fundraiser, raise the Ukrainian flag, or post ways to support Ukraine on its website without requiring a delegation's appeal. The contrasting responses to the Ukrainian and Palestinian crises underscore a blatant double standard rooted in racial bias and white supremacy.

We must emphasize that part of CV4P's responsibility is to critique and hold our community's political representatives accountable. Courtenay Council's actions, or lack thereof, echo those of settler colonial Canadian and United States governments, which perpetuate and support the ongoing oppression of Palestinians. Your tepid ceasefire statement, issued after months of bureaucratic deflections and refusals to engage with our community, is a stark example of political timidity and hypocrisy.

The situation in Gaza is dire and demands immediate and unequivocal condemnation. The Israeli military continues to kill Palestinians daily, and the international community, including local governments like yours, has a moral duty to speak out against these atrocities. The comparison to your council's swift and enthusiastic support for Ukraine starkly highlights the selective empathy and solidarity extended by Courtenay Council. The ease with which the council took a stand against Russia's invasion of Ukraine, while dragging its feet on Gaza, is a clear indication of the selective value placed on different human lives.

As we continue to witness the genocide in Gaza, we remain committed to refusing ignorance and complicity in the face of severe human rights violations. The people of Courtenay deserve representatives who stand firmly for humanity and justice, without succumbing to political convenience or racial bias. We urge you to reconsider your stance and take meaningful action to support Palestinian safety and freedom.

We will not forget Courtenay Council's cowardice in the face of genocide. We will persist in our advocacy and continue to hold our local government accountable for their actions and inactions.

Sincerely,

Comox Valley for Palestine