



Resolution Denouncing the Dehumanization of Palestinians and its Impacts

(Adopted by the NCA Legislative Assembly, November 2024)

Whereas, NCA's Strategic Plan begins with the goal of "Creat[ing] conditions to support and empower members," states "Promot[ing] communication's value" as the second goal, and "Embrac[ing] and enact[ing] inclusivity, diversity, equity, and access" as the third goal,

Whereas, in 2022 NCA's Legislative Assembly unanimously endorsed an Inclusion, Diversity, Equity, and Access (IDEA) Strategic Plan¹, led by the IDEA Task Force, which situates its purpose within "an organizational desire to reckon and respond to our past failures as an organization," and which includes "Assess and improve the organizational climate of NCA for historical disenfranchised members" as Goal 1, and "Evaluate and restructure the organization to render NCA a more inclusive, diverse, equitable, and accessible organization" as Goal 5,

Whereas, as of 2022, 12 articles are the entire history of knowledge that at least partly centers Palestine within the 11 journals that NCA published at the time², which gives clear evidence of Palestinian members of NCA as historical disenfranchised members,

Whereas, communication scholars have shown unequivocally that "dehumanization is woven through the fabric of genocide"³ and long established that language is the central channel through which dehumanization occurs⁴,

Whereas, Israeli Prime Ministers have a long history of dehumanizing Palestinians^{5 6}, including Israel's first Prime Minister, David Ben-Gurion saying that "We view [Palestinians] like donkeys. They don't care. They accept it with love;" Israel's fourth Prime Minister Golda Meir stating that "We cannot forgive [Palestinians] for forcing us to kill their children," Israel's sixth Prime Minister Menachem Begin describing Palestinians as "two footed animals;"⁷ Israel's seventh Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir asserting that "[The Palestinians] would be crushed like grasshoppers...heads smashed against the boulders and walls;" Israel's 10th Prime Minister Ehud Barak stating that "The Palestinians are like crocodiles, the more you give them meat, they want more," and Israel's 11th Prime Minister, Ariel Sharon, in 2002 directing his Chief of Staff and a troop commander this way: "If possible [Palestinians] should get awake every morning finding out they get 10 or 12 corpses, without knowing what happened...You must be creative, efficient, sophisticated,"

Whereas, since Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the dehumanizing rhetoric from Israel's current Prime Minister (Benjamin Netanyahu) has dramatically escalated and repeated across months of speeches and media appearances, including describing the war as "a battle of civilization against barbarism," as a "war between the sons of light and the sons of darkness," saying that "Gaza is the city of evil,"

Whereas, Israeli officials have a long history of dehumanizing Palestinians^{8 9 10}, including cabinet minister Rafael Eitan saying that Palestinians "will only be able to scurry around like drugged roaches in a bottle" if his 1983 plan to multiply settlements was adopted^{11 12}, Israeli President Moshe Katsav responding to the murder of two Israeli youths by Palestinians in 2001 this way: "There is a huge gap between us and our enemies, not just in ability but in morality, culture, sanctity of life, and conscience;" Moshe Feiglin, former Deputy Speaker of the Israeli Knesset, stating in 2014 that "One hair on the head of an Israeli soldier is more precious than the entire Gazan populace," and former Minister of Interior and Minister of Justice Ayelet Shaked proclaiming that "It is not a war against terror, and not a war against extremists, and not even a war against the Palestinian Authority....Who is the enemy? The Palestinian people."

Whereas, since Hamas' attack on Israel on October 7, 2023, the dehumanizing rhetoric from Israeli officials has dramatically increased^{13 14}, including Defense Minister Yoav Gallant calling Palestinians "human animals," (a phrase having a long history, as noted, and repeated by multiple Israeli officials since October 7th, 2023) then continuing by

stating that “We are fighting animals and are acting accordingly.” A member of the Knesset (Revital Tali Gottlieb), repeated a claim made by the President of Israel (Isaac Herzog) that “there are no innocents in Gaza,” but pushing it further: “There are no uninvolved, neither in Khan Yunis nor in Saja'iyah. They are all deserving of death;” Deputy Speaker of the Knesset (Nissim Vaturi) continuing the theme, arguing that “there are no innocents” in Gaza” and also asked “Who's left in Gaza? Are there citizens?” following by suggesting that “There are only tunnels, Hamas, and accursed terrorists who murdered children and are holding children hostage;” Israel’s Finance Minister (Bezalel Yoel Smotrich) activating the memory of the Holocaust by suggesting that “there are 2 million Nazis in Gaza;” former Israeli Ambassador to the United Nations Dan Gilbert saying in an interview: “I am very puzzled by the constant concern which the world is showing for the Palestinian people,” then calling the Palestinian people “inhuman animals” and comparing them to the Taliban (“I don't remember people shedding tears for the Taliban”)¹⁵; and a member of the Knesset (Merav Ben-Ari) contrasting Palestinian children with Israeli people this way: “The children in Gaza have brought this upon themselves. We are a people who live in peace, a people who seek life.”

Whereas, both Israeli officials and President Biden have repeatedly made false claims that contribute to the dehumanization of Palestinians, including repeated reference to Hamas’ beheading of babies on October 7, 2023, a claim proven to be false¹⁶.

Whereas, dehumanization is widely recognized as the fourth stage of the 10 stages of genocide¹⁷, and the Montreal Holocaust Museum recommends “promptly denounc[ing] and punish[ing]” users of dehumanizing language as a form of genocide prevention¹⁸,

Whereas, the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination (UNCERD) released a statement less than 20 days into Israel’s war on Gaza [October 27, 2023], in which they express being “highly concerned about the sharp increase in racist hate speech and dehumanization directed at Palestinians since 7 October, particularly on the Internet and in social media, including by senior officials, politicians, members of the Parliament, and public figures, particularly the statement of 9 October made by the Israeli Minister of Defense, Yoav Gallant, in which he referred to Palestinians as ‘human animals’, language which could incite genocidal actions.”¹⁹

Whereas the dehumanizing rhetoric has reached such lengths that a recent poll by the Israeli Institute for National Security Studies revealed that the majority of the Israeli public is against the prosecution of an Israeli soldier for the sexual assault and murder of a Palestinian detainee²⁰,

Whereas, Israel has committed the following atrocities against Palestinians since October 7, 2023 (as of May 24, 2024)²¹: the killing of at least 41,455 people, including more than 16,500 children, the injury of more than 95,878 people, with more than 10,000 missing (presumed to be killed under rubble) in Gaza, and the killing of at least 716 people, including 160 children, and the injury of more than 5,700 Palestinians in the West Bank.

Whereas, the United Nations has shown that between October 8 and October 21, 2023, among other periods since, Israel closed off all entries to Gaza, preventing all food, goods, humanitarian aid, medicine, and other basic needs from entering, and shut off all electricity, water, and gas.²²

Whereas, Israel has inflicted forced starvation upon the population in Gaza, with a report released on March 18, 2024 by the Integrated Food Security Phase Classification (IPC)²³ finding that “starvation is imminent for 1.1 million people in Gaza” and there is not a single person in Gaza classified as having food security. A June, 2024 update concludes that “about 96 percent of the population in the Gaza Strip (2.15M people) face high levels of acute food insecurity” and that “the whole territory is classified in Emergency (IPC Phase 4)” with nearly 500,000 people (22% of the population) “facing catastrophic levels of acute food insecurity (IPC Phase 5),” which reflects “extreme lack of food, starvation, and exhaustion of coping capacities”²⁴

Whereas, the United States bears some responsibility over the atrocities committed by Israel as a result of over \$200 billion in military aid to Israel since its inception, with the Biden administration sending more than 100 arms shipments

to Israel and requesting \$14 billion in additional military aid since October 7, 2023^{25 26}, along with the repeated use of its veto power to stop UN calls for either humanitarian aid corridors or a ceasefire in Gaza²⁷,

Whereas, the US Center for Constitutional Rights in 2016 described Israel's decades long violence against the Palestinian people as a genocide²⁸ and on October 18, 2023 released an emergency legal briefing that situated what they described as an "unfolding genocide" in Gaza²⁹, and has joined 138 non-governmental organizations, including Jewish organizations, in filing a lawsuit against the Biden administration for their failure to prevent, and thus their complicity in, genocide³⁰,

Whereas, on December 29, 2023, South Africa brought claims against Israel to the International Court of Justice (ICJ) alleging violations by Israel of its obligations under the Convention on the Prevention and Punishment of the Crime of Genocide (the Genocide Convention).

Whereas, the ICJ, in their preliminary report (released January 26, 2024), concluded that it was "plausible" that Israel was committing acts of genocide and ordered several provisional measures with which Israel must comply prior to the court's final decision about the appeal³¹, almost all of which it has failed to do³².

Whereas, on March 25, 2024, a report from the *United Nations Special Rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territories occupied since 1967* concluded that "there are reasonable grounds to believe that the threshold indicating Israel's commission of genocide is met."³³

Whereas, the UNRWA Commissioner-General has argued that Israel's devastation of Gaza is "compounded by dehumanizing language,"³⁴

Whereas, scholars have argued that "censorship is a crucial complement of genocide,"³⁵

Whereas, there are multiple reports of an "unprecedented surge in anti-Palestinian repression" in the United States and throughout the world since October 7, 2023,^{36 37}

Whereas, criticism of Israel as a state actor is not the same as antisemitism,³⁸ despite this, political actors around the world are using this false conflation in a manner that undermines free speech,³⁹

Whereas, Zionism is a political project which is approximately 150 years old,^{40 41} while Judaism is the world's first Abrahamic monotheistic religion that is approximately 4,000 years old and is centered on justice⁴²,

Whereas, the conflation of Zionism and Judaism and the assertion that all criticism of Israel is antisemitic are both communication tactics used to silence Jews and other critics of Israel to prevent and delegitimize their speech^{43 44 45}, and over 40 Jewish groups across the world have expressed opposition to this problematic conflation,⁴⁶ and Jewish members of NCA have reported it being used to question their religious identity and silence them,

Whereas, members of NCA have long experienced intimidation, censorship, harassment, and/or silencing for their Palestine-centered speech, with accounts of such experiences dramatically increasing since October 7,

Whereas, the NCA 2023 convention was a site of Palestine censorship⁴⁷ in that Dr. Ahlam Muhtaseb, a prominent Palestinian Communication scholar who was receiving a Presidential Citation for her impact on the field, was not allowed to give her Palestine-focused short discipline visioning, as part of the convention's Presidential Address⁴⁸, ostensibly because of the belief that her reference to the genocide in Gaza and the call to "Free Palestine" would do "irreparable harm" to NCA^{49 50},

Whereas, NCA is neither "supporting and empowering" its members in shared struggle with Palestine, nor "reckoning and responding to its past failures", nor "improving its climate for historical disenfranchised members" without a

resolution that (a) acknowledges the historical role of dehumanizing language and its impact on the ongoing genocide of Palestinian people, (b) denounces false connotations through communicative acts that are intended to silence criticisms of the settler colonial project that is Israel, (c) supports members experiencing censorship or other threats to academic freedom as a result of their Palestine advocacy, and (d) commits to actions that lift Palestinian members and those members engaged in joint shared struggle and advocacy.

Let it be resolved that NCA:

1. Denounces all forms of racism, bias, bigotry, and discrimination, including anti-Palestinian racism, as well as Islamophobia, antisemitism, anti-Blackness, among others;
2. Denounces the dehumanizing rhetoric against Palestinians;
3. Denounces the communicative practices of falsely conflating Zionism with Judaism, unfairly framing all criticism of Israel as antisemitic, and other tactics used to silence legitimate criticisms of political communication and processes;
4. Supports the UNCERD call for Israel to “rescind its blockade policy and urgently allow and facilitate the rebuilding of homes and civilian infrastructures; ensure access to necessary urgent humanitarian assistance; and also ensure the right to freedom of movement, housing, education, health care, water and sanitation, in compliance with the [International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination, to which Israel has been a party since 1979]”⁵¹;
5. Calls for a permanent ceasefire, and the release of all Palestinian political prisoners and Palestinians in military detention, along with the remaining Israeli hostages;
6. Engages in a restorative justice process, led by professionals trained in related practices, with (willing) Palestinian communication scholars negatively impacted by the censorship that occurred at the 2023 convention Presidential address;
7. Affirms its commitment to advocating for the protection of free speech by denouncing efforts to silence Palestinian advocacy, whether that be in NCA spaces, on college campuses, in K-12 institutions, or in any organization in the United States or elsewhere;
8. Directs the Research Council to develop a proposal (for consideration through the standard proposal process) that creates an NCA-funded Request for Proposals that supports research on dehumanizing language and its effects, with some portion set aside to fund proposals that focus on the dehumanization of Palestinians and its impacts;
9. Commits to creating space across NCA outlets (podcasts, publications, convention) that engage the question of Palestine, lifts Palestinian voices, and that speak to the shared struggles for liberation across communities.

Be it further resolved that NCA publishes on the primary landing page of its website an annual update that addresses progress on these commitments, starting January 2025 until January 2030.

Be it further resolved that a copy of this resolution be sent by email to all NCA members, be posted on NCA’s website, and be sent to the President of the United States of America, the Western States Communication Association Executive Committee, the Southern States Communication Association Administrative Committee, the Central States Communication Association Executive Committee, the Eastern States Communication Association Board Officers, and the International Communication Association Executive Committee.

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<https://www.nytimes.com/2023/11/15/world/middleeast/israel-gaza-war-rhetoric.html>

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