

Executive Council of the American Educational Studies Association,

[AESA's statement](#) sends a clear message to Palestinians, namely that Palestinian life is worthless whereby Israelis are justified in murdering them with impunity in a so-called “conflict” that assumes two equal forces. The statement does not address or concede that Israel is a settler colonial project, whose explicit goal is the systematic killing and ethnic cleansing of Palestinians. It assigns no responsibility or blame to a nuclear power that has outrightly acknowledged its aim is Palestinian genocide as civilian casualties are assigned the euphemism 'collateral damage.' The statement thus presents the “loss of life” as a result of an apparent conflict that began on October 7th, 2023. This ahistorical account decontextualizes violence and places full responsibility on Palestinians, as well as flattens the differences between various resistance groups. It ignores the bombing of all [universities](#) in Gaza and omits the bombing of schools, hospitals, mosques, and refugee camps, as well as the deliberate targeting of medical and UN staff. It omits the racial, colonial, and dehumanizing discourses and rhetoric justifying genocide and ethnic cleansing (e.g., “[children of darkness](#)” and “[human animals](#)”).

Although the statement does not specify the Islamophobic trope of human shields, the language alludes to it by pointing to the (passive) loss of life of Palestinians who find themselves in the “crossfire.” This erases the fact that Israel dropped tens of thousands of bombs (as in 25, 000 tons of explosives-the equivalent of two nuclear bombs) before the possibility of the crossfire to which the statement refers. It paints the picture of helpless Palestinians who are held hostage by Hamas. It ignores the substantial evidence shown by Amnesty International (2009) that Israel has previously used Palestinians as human shields¹, let alone that Palestinians live under military occupation and conditions worse than Apartheid ([B'Tselem, 2021](#)).

The vagueness in the proceeding sentences ignores the right to resistance (though supported by international law), suggesting that Palestinians do not have the right to resist settler colonial dispossession, displacement, ethnic cleansing, and genocide. The statement's authors refer to war crimes and genocide but fail to mention genocide scholars, human rights lawyers, and UN officials² who have collectively agreed that Israel's military campaign in Gaza constitutes

¹ Even before the existence of Israel, British soldiers (100,000) taught Zionists the technologies of colonial violence mastered in Ireland, India, and Africa. For instance, Zionists have used human shields by tying Palestinians to military vehicles to avoid being ambushed during the Great Revolt (1936-1939). The use of the phrase “caught in the crossfire” misleads readers into thinking that the thousands of Palestinians killed could have been by Hamas. Israelis were deliberately “killed” yet Palestinians lose their lives.

² As the director of the New York office of the UN high commissioner, Craig Mokhiber, stated after his resignation: “The current wholesale slaughter of the Palestinian people, rooted in an ethno-nationalist colonial settler ideology, in continuation of decades of their systematic persecution and purging, based entirely upon their status as Arabs ... leaves no room for doubt....This is text book case of genocide” that violates the Geneva Conventions.

documented war crimes that precisely meet the 1948 Genocide Convention's definition of genocide. They fail to mention Israel's responsibility altogether, leaving it open to interpretation. Consider the following sentence: "Political conflicts, even when they involve grave denials of human rights, can never justify nor be resolved through attacks on innocent civilians, especially the loss of children." Israel is not simply denying human rights. It is engaged in a genocidal campaign, which has only intensified since October 7th, but this does not mean that thousands have not been displaced, arrested, tortured, purposefully maimed, and killed previously, including thousands of imprisoned children. Important to note is how the statement disregards Jerusalem and the West Bank, where Hamas does not play a role, yet hundreds of Palestinians have been killed, arrested, and displaced since October 7th by ongoing settler violence. Over [2,470 arrests](#) post Oct.7 have taken place for merely posting (or even liking a tweet) on social media that highlights the plight of Palestine.

While genocide and ethnic cleansing is taking place, this statement is not only apologetic, but it also consumes and colludes in the blatant reproduction of Zionist propaganda. This statement reflects everything Edward Said (1994) warned us about concerning academia and its complicit academics/intellectuals, "Nothing in my view is more reprehensible than those habits of mind in the intellectual that induce avoidance, that characteristic turning away from a difficult and principled position, which you know to be the right one, but which you decide not to take. Personally I have encountered them in one of the toughest of all contemporary issues, Palestine, where fear of speaking out about one of the greatest injustices in modern history has hobbled, blinkered, and muzzled many who know the truth and are in a position to serve it. For despite the abuse and vilification that any outspoken supporter of Palestinian rights and self-determination earns for him or herself, the truth deserves to be spoken, represented by an unafraid and compassionate intellectual" (p. 100).

Instead of consulting Palestinian scholars, including students, the council wrote a statement that is not only historically inaccurate but is very much skewed toward Israel's direction. As genocide and ethnic cleansing unfold where nearly 80% of Palestinians have been violently displaced, this statement manifests the worst kind of "solidarity" that should not be exhibited by those who have any kind of human conscience left. AESA's statement speaks volumes by what it overtly omits and what it artificially hollows out in meaning and language via poorly defined vague terms. On rare occasions, it is best to keep silent, but this is a clear example that superficial forms of solidarity do more harm, as they justify the ongoing massacre of Palestinians by painting an image of them as unworthy of liberation and undeserving of an end to their settler colonial occupation that has lasted over a 100 years.

Millions of people across the world have made it quite clear: What's happening in Palestine cannot be understood as a "conflict." It is an ongoing Nakba, a continuing genocide, ethnic cleansing, and occupation, which underlies a history worse than apartheid that did not begin on October 7th. Rather, the settler colonial project in Palestine can be traced back to the 1880s with

the emergence of the Zionist movement, and over 100 years of settler colonial domination and expansion in Palestine—including the 1917 Balfour Declaration, 1947 Partition Plan, violent establishment of Israel and start of the Nakba, the 1967 Naksa and occupation, and ceaseless expansion of settlements. As academics we ask for a retraction of this statement and the issuance of a new one befitting of the historical, material, and symbolic gravity if we are to honor our responsibility and role as truth-seekers, knowledge-keepers, and committed intellectuals.

Signed

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