

From: [Niagara Region Website](#)
To: [Clerks](#)
Subject: Online Form - Request to Speak at a Standing Committee or Regional Council
Date: Wednesday, January 24, 2024 11:04:54 AM
Attachments: [Letter to Niagara Regional Council.pdf](#)

Request to Speak at a Standing Committee or Regional Council

To reply, copy the email address from below and put into 'To'. (if resident entered their email address)

Name

Tami J. Friedman

Address

[REDACTED]

City

Thorold

[REDACTED]

Phone

[REDACTED]

Email

[REDACTED]

standing committee

Regional Council

Presentation Topic

Motion - Support for Israelis and Palestinians Living in Niagara (Agenda Item 13.2)

Presentation includes slides

No

Previously presented topic

No

Presentation Details

I would like to speak as a Jewish resident of the Niagara Region who supports Regional Councilor Bateman's motion urging the Canadian government to support an immediate ceasefire in Gaza and to facilitate the acceptance of extended family members of Palestinians living in Canada, as it is imperative that we do our utmost to ensure the safety and security of these family members who are currently under siege in Gaza.

Video Consent

Yes

Support_File_1

Letter to Niagara Regional Council.pdf



January 24, 2024

Dear Members of the Niagara Regional Council:

I write to you as a Jewish resident of Thorold, urging you to support Regional Councilor Haley Bateman's motion, "Support for Israelis and Palestinians Living in Niagara" (Agenda Item 13.2).

As you know, Hamas committed horrifying atrocities against Israeli civilians on October 7, 2023. These actions – which cannot be fully understood without acknowledging the generations of Israeli occupation and brutal treatment of Palestinians that preceded them – have been followed by a massive, relentless months-long campaign of retaliation in Gaza, with reverberations in the West Bank and Israel itself.

As of right now, more than 25,000 Palestinians have been killed and another 63,000 wounded. These are only the casualties that have been confirmed; undoubtedly there are many more. Beyond this, Israel's war has caused a humanitarian crisis of unspeakable proportions resulting from mass displacement, destroyed infrastructure, and lack of food, water, medical supplies, and other basic necessities of life. The United Nations and other respected international human rights organizations are sounding the alarm about the disaster unfolding before our eyes.

Alongside its war on Gaza, the far-right Israeli government – which, prior to October 7, was working to neutralize the Supreme Court amid widespread public protest by Israeli citizens – is engaged in a global public-relations campaign to neutralize criticism of its policies toward Palestinians and, in particular, to equate such criticism with anti-Semitism. Establishment Jewish organizations that claim to speak for all Jews, particularly in the United States but also here in Canada, are at the forefront in spearheading this campaign.

As an American who migrated to Canada in 2005 and is now a dual citizen, I have embraced my adopted country and deeply respect its efforts, at various times, to forge its own path in the face of outside pressures – especially from its powerful southern neighbor, the United States. As an historian who teaches U.S. history, I know how difficult it can be for U.S. allies to follow an independent road.

As a Jew who grew up deeply attached to the State of Israel, I have come to reject the Israeli government's claim that its brutal repression of Palestinians is meant to protect Jews all over the world from harm. Too many political leaders accept this claim at face value and use it to justify turning a blind eye to Israeli atrocities. But Jewish voices are diverse, and many Jews, including some of us right here in Niagara, are choosing a path of peace, justice, and equality in Israel-Palestine.

Today, I believe, we have a unique opportunity to break free of external pressures and stand up for humanity. As regional councilors, you are being asked to communicate to the Canadian government that your constituents support genuine diplomatic solutions to the Israel-Palestine crisis. An immediate ceasefire will allow the space to promote such solutions.

You also are being asked to urge the Canadian government to show compassion for our friends and neighbors right here in Niagara. Palestinians we know and care about are desperately seeking ways to ensure the safety and security of extended family members now trapped in Gaza. As regional councilors, your collective voice – calling on federal authorities to accept more Palestinian refugees and assist them however we can – carries more weight than our individual pleas.

Some might argue that, as regional councilors, you should not weigh in on foreign policy matters. But foreign policy affects all of us, even – sometimes especially – at the level of our local neighborhoods and communities. Presumably, for this reason, the Niagara Regional Council voted unanimously in May 2022 to denounce Russia's invasion of Ukraine and even to communicate its views directly to the Russian Federation. The situation in Gaza is equally relevant to those of us who live here: Jews, Arabs, Muslims, and all others who have a stake in forging peace in the Middle East and, by extension, building a peaceful community right here at home.

Thank you very much.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Tami J. Friedman". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "T" and "F".