

Subject: Statement on Isreal and Palestine

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To: response@ocgov.com, donald.wagner@ocgov.com, andrew.do@ocgov.com, katrina.foley@ocgov.com

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Dear Supervisors,

I was born and raised here in Orange County and I currently work here. I'm alarmed and deeply disappointed by the shockingly offensive anti-Palestinian and Islamophobic statement on October 10, 2023, in response to the recent tragic developments in Palestine. This irresponsible statement puts our whole community at an increased risk of hate crimes. As an elected official who represents a diverse community in Orange County—including Palestinian Americans, Arab Americans, and American Muslims—I ask that you acknowledge the suffering of all individuals affected by the violence, including the ongoing suffering of the Palestinians people by the Israeli state.

I remember what it was like to be in high school in the aftermath of 9-11, when the country was beating the drums of war. I remember the "your with us or against us rhetoric" and the lies the public was fed and the devastation that our country's actions had on countless families here and so many more in the middle east. I remember viscerally the dramatic change in the way people here in Orange County treated my best friend who is middle eastern. The blatant racism that he was shown by community members and community leaders and law enforcement who were supposed to protect us teenagers. Your language in this statement is all too familiar and rhetoric which led to so much islamophobia here in our beautiful multicultural county.

These double standards cause profound and direct harm to your Palestinian American, Arab American, and American Muslim constituents. At a time of alarming rise in hate crimes and incidents <

The statement also asks local leaders, who have nothing to do with the recent escalation, to condemn the violence. This request not only ignores the fact that Muslim leaders have repeatedly condemned terrorism and violence against innocents but is extremely dangerous for our communities. You would never, nor should you ever, ask local Jewish people who have nothing to do with the actions of Israel to condemn the consistent and persistent acts of state-sponsored

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violence inflicted by the Israeli government on innocent Palestinian civilians. Such an action would be antisemitic, just as the Supervisor's statement is Islamophobic. These double standards are harmful and make our community less safe.

I urge you to retract your hateful statement and meet with local Arab American and Palestinian American human rights advocates to gain an informed perspective of the situation and meet with local Muslim leaders to gain a better standing of Islam and address your harmful statements.

I also ask you to publicly and categorically denounce anti-Palestinian racism, propaganda, and dehumanizing language.

Regards,

Kathleen Ripley