

Item  
A-5

## **Proposed Community Conversation by EHRAC on The Equity and Human Relation Impacts of the Ask for a Ceasefire Resolution**

**Note: This report/statement has been prepared by EHRAC Chair, Samia Bano.**

### **Event purpose & vision:**

For several months a group of community members has been lobbying the City Council to agendaize and issue a resolution expressing support for a mutual and permanent ceasefire in Gaza. Other community members have voiced strong dissent for this idea.

Community members with opinions across the spectrum on this issue have voiced feeling unheard, dismissed, dehumanized, like no one understands or cares for their pain and suffering, and many other difficult emotions.

Furthermore, the situation has been escalating with the community members feeling increasingly divided, frustrated and angry. Several residents have even reported receiving death threats due to their position on the ceasefire issue.

We believe that we must urgently convene a community conversation where our community members can have a safe space to feel truly heard and walk away with more empathy and compassion for people with differing views on this issue.

There will be no panelists or experts making presentations or speeches. The goal and focus of the event is to facilitate a conversation among the community members.

It should be understood that this is not a conversation to discuss the specifics of the proposed ceasefire resolution, but rather to better understand the equity and human relation concerns that have come to light as a result of some members of the community wanting the ceasefire resolution to be passed.

It should also be understood that it is not the goal of this community conversation to build consensus on whether the ceasefire resolution should or shouldn't be passed.

This community conversation is to help create the conditions needed for our community members to engage with each other and the city with more civility, empathy and compassion for each other. This in turn can allow new possibilities and deeper understanding to emerge for all stakeholders.

### **Event details:**

EHRAC has already confirmed two professional, very skilled and experienced facilitators, to facilitate the community conversation on November 19th. One facilitator belongs to the Israeli-American community, and the other to the Palestinian-American community.

Please see their bios below.

### **Facilitator 1:**

**Zahra Sakkejha** was born and raised in Toronto to Palestinian parents. Her father, born a refugee during the Nakba of 1948, and her mother, having grown up under occupation in East Jerusalem, raised her not to take for granted the privilege of living in a free society.

Growing up in Toronto, Zahra made many Jewish friends but noticed that conversations about Israel and Palestine were largely avoided. It wasn't until she moved to Los Angeles that she began to more deeply engage in political discourse with both Arabs and Jews.

In 2023, Zahra joined the board of Tomorrow's Women, a member organization of the Alliance for Middle East Peace (ALLMEP) that trains young Palestinian and Israeli women to be compassionate leaders. She led the organization's Strategic Planning effort in 2024 to provide culturally sensitive and sustainable direction during an unprecedented war.

When the most recent war broke out on and after October 7th, Zahra began community organizing with the newly established LA Supporters of Standing Together, a group of Los Angeles-based Palestinians, Israelis, and allies organizing against the occupation and for peace, equality, and social justice. In 2024, she started Dialogue in the Diaspora, a local dialogue circle bringing Palestinians and Jews together for facilitated conversations about Israel-Palestine. Zahra is also an incoming fellow to the NewGround Professional Change-Maker Program.

Zahra is proud of her Palestinian heritage, grateful for her Canadian privilege, and energized by her eternal optimism to promote authentic connection between Palestinians and Israelis to facilitate transformative understanding and practical partnership for the ultimate goal of achieving peace, justice, and equality in their homeland.

#### **Facilitator 2:**

**Michal Greenfield.** Born and raised in Los Angeles, Michal moved to Israel/Palestine in 2014 and lived there for the past 10 years, where she earned a Bachelor's degree in Fine Arts from Bezalel Academy in Jerusalem.

Previously Michal worked with the cross-border organization Tech2Peace, in which she established the framework of the alumni community, creating a growth model that oversaw the development of 100 to 600 members.

As an artist, she acted as the curator and producer of the "Greenhouse" event series, which carved a space for artistic community and collaborations within the culturally diverse populace in Jerusalem. Michal has returned to live in Los Angeles, where she acts as the Operations Coordinator for the interfaith organization NewGround, building strategic bridges between the Muslim and Jewish communities in Southern California. She is an active organizer with the Los Angeles chapter of Standing Together, and finds her passion in strengthening the role of community and friendship in activism, dialogue, and social impact.

#### **Event budget: \$0**

Note: The two facilitators have agreed to volunteer their time if the community conversation is held on

Nov 19th.

**Event time: 6pm to 9pm**

**Event Date:**

**Ideally, November 19, 2024.**

Note: this will require the city council to agendaize and approve EHRAC's request to hold this event at the Nov 11<sup>th</sup> City Council meeting.

If for some reason the above option is not possible, EHRAC requests that City Council agendaize and approve EHRAC's request at the very next City Council meeting on December 9<sup>th</sup>, such that EHRAC can host the community conversation on **January 7<sup>th</sup>**.

**Proposed structure for the community conversation:**

The community conversation will be divided into 3 very important parts.

**Part 1: Strong framing** to clarify the goals of the community conversation and set realistic expectations around what is and isn't possible in the time we have that evening (described in the event purpose and vision above).

Plus, strong framing of the rules and guidelines to be followed by all participants to allow for a courageous conversation/civil discourse to take place that evening.

**Part 2:** The event facilitators will engage in a courageous conversation themselves to **present a model** for how the participants can and will be encouraged to engage with each other.

**Part 3:** The **participants are given the opportunity to engage** in facilitated conversation with each other.

**Some possible prompts/questions** the participants may be asked to speak to each other about:

-- Why I've showed up today/what's at stake for me?

-- How do I think I'm being misunderstood? What do I want others to understand about me or my position?

-- What do I believe the city is doing right when it comes to creating more equity and better human relations?

-- What do I believe the city can do better to create more equity and better human relations?

**An additional element to the program** may be for the participants and/or EHRAC members to **produce written notes, to be passed along to the city council**, reflecting key lessons/insights gained through the evening's conversation, particularly highlighting those lessons/insights that point towards solutions for creating more equity and improving human relations in Culver City.