



## **Veteran Civil Rights and Peace Activists Support Student Movement in Solidarity with Palestine.**

### **National Council of Elders calls upon university presidents to listen to the voices of their students, remove police from campuses**

The National Council of Elders calls upon all people to embrace the courageous students demanding a ceasefire in Gaza, an end to the occupation of Palestine by the Israeli government, and the divestment of university funds that support weapons and War.

As veterans of the great liberation movements of the twentieth century, we understand that young people demanding justice and peace are critical to creating more compassionate, responsible societies. Their visions and values of the future are being practiced in encampments on campuses as they construct communities to care for each other, to learn together, and to develop concrete processes for change.

The consciousness and sensibilities of today's students has been shaped by actions stretching over the last decade. With Occupy Wall Street, climate justice actions, Me Too, and the Movement for Black lives, students have been demonstrating courage and tenacity in the face of ever escalating repression. Many are stepping forward for the first time and recognizing their power to create change.

Students are focusing attention on the hypocrisy of those in authority who laud an armed attack on the US Capitol as "patriotic tourism" and condemn as "terrorism" peaceful student gatherings on their own campuses.

Universities run by corporate boards and presidents steeped in the worlds of wealth and finance are giving up any pretense of respect for students and faculty or of a commitment to intellectual honesty and rigorous debate. In actions reminiscent of the worst days of McCarthyism, administrations are expelling students, firing faculty, and welcoming police onto campuses while claiming they are protecting the

university. In reality, most of them are destroying the very foundations of freedom essential to democratic action.

Many of us have spent our lives on campuses as professors and as honored guests. We have been celebrated in publications for work in developing ideas that moved this country forward. It is clear to us that today's universities are moving in the wrong direction and are on the wrong side of history.

**Not one major university president has condemned the bloody atrocities in Gaza or the continued violations of international law by the Netanyahu government.**

**Not one has condemned the destruction of the universities in Gaza.**

**Not one has shown concern for the deaths of Palestinians.**

**Not one has denounced attacks on Muslims, Arabs, or Arab Americans on their campus.**

**Not one has condemned the caging of children.**

**Not one has condemned the killings of African Americans by police.**

**Not one has condemned the use of torture and assassination by our government to control and destabilize other peoples.**

**Not one has condemned the increased nuclear armaments in the US.**

**Not one has presented a moral center that enables us to act ethically and lovingly in our ever-complicated world.**

The only values they represent are the protection of endowments and big donors.

This moral vacuum of leadership is now being filled by students.

Our whole country, including university presidents, should congratulate and thank students for learning the most important lesson of their lives: *They can make history.*

*They are making it now.*

**We stand with them. We pledge to support them, to encourage and protect them, and to recognize the sacrifices they are making in hopes of a free, self-determining Palestine and a better world.**