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ANTISEMITISM-ISLAMOPHOBIA-RACISM A SCOURGE IN THE LIFE OF OUR NATION!

DETROIT – The current reality of war in the Middle East between Israel and Hamas has poured down like rain on the very sanity and humanity of anyone who believes in the respect for life. October 7, 2023, shall long live in the memories of families in which over 1,400 Israeli's were killed, babies burned, bodies mutilated, over 200 persons kidnapped, and women raped in various Israeli kibbutzim. These acts must be condemned and called out no matter who does it or where it occurs in the world. In this case it was Israel, and the perpetrators were Hamas. This has led to an overwhelming response by Israel resulting in the daily bombing of the Gaza Strip, an area where Hamas is reportedly located. Buildings and homes have been destroyed, along with the killing of members of Hamas. But also thousands of innocent Palestinians, men, women, and children, most of whom were not involved in the initial attack on Israel have been killed. It has created a humanitarian crisis that tears at the very spirit of those who respect life. It is most difficult to hear and see the cries for food, water, fuel, and medicine from women, elders, and children without feeling their desperation. There are over one million children living in Gaza. It must be noted that one can feel the desperation and hunger for peace and security of both people at the same time.

While we can analyze and debate the historic, theological, political, and geographical reasons as to how the world has arrived at this precise moment, the real question for each of us is how we overcome this abyss before reaching and sinking deeper into the point of no return. According to the Jewish Ethics of the Father 2:21, *"You are not obligated to finish the work; neither are you free to desist from it."* We all have a stake in peace. We all have a reason to work for dignity and respect for all persons. There is always a threat of alienating friends and family whenever one speaks truth to power. Yet one must be true to himself. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. said, *"Our lives begin to end the day we become silent about things that matter."* The survival of Israel matters. The survival of the Palestinians matters. Peace and security in the world matters. We must be concerned about the obstacles in the way to a long-term peace. Turning villages with nothing into more nothing leaves nothing. It simply leads to an increase in hate, more violence than before, and reasons for the antisemitic crowd to cry even louder for Jewish lives.

The Jewish population in the metro Detroit area is nearly 72,000 persons. According to FBI data, the Jewish population is 2.4% in the United States but has 60% of religious based hate crimes. This is unacceptable. The killing of innocent civilians and kidnapping of seniors and children leads to more hate and Islamophobia. The FBI has indicated, *"this hate is on the increase in the country."* Detroit, bordered by the city of Dearborn, is the home of the largest Arab American population, over 200,000, outside of the Middle East.

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The Council on American Islamic Relations indicates more than 800 cases of Islamophobia have been reported in just one month. There is a remarkable increase in the cases of Islamophobia and hate against Muslims throughout the nation as well. And yes, for the African American community racism has never taken a pause. We can still be shot to death or beaten beyond recognition running, walking, or even sleeping while Black in various locations around the country. This hate, racism, and division must not be tolerated. Perpetrators of such vile and incendiary incidents and actions should be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

While we work for this reality to change, humanity cries out for food, water, medicine, and fuel in the Gaza Strip. Each day it becomes more difficult to simply ignore the cries. Steps can and must be taken to end the madness or change its course. It is indeed good to see the process of releasing Americans and other foreign nationals who have been waiting for days and weeks at the Rafah border to cross into Egypt, finally on their way home. All hostages should immediately be released unconditionally. Humanitarian aid must be allowed to go to the people at the brink of devastation inside Gaza. As long as bombs are dropped, innocent people will die, and more hate will grow. As long as attacks of terrorism persist, innocent people will be sacrificed, and hate will rise up perhaps beyond the capacity to contain it. People who believe in justice want to see an end to war and the establishment of true peace. Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. reminds us, *"True peace is not the absence of conflict. It is the presence of justice."*

While the storm is still raging, a search must still begin for an end to these triplets of human discontent - Islamophobia, antisemitism, and racism. It by no means describes all of the hateful and divisive "isms" of discrimination. We simply seek a place right here to establish some common ground. It may be on some common ground that people are able to build something upon which they can stand. Ultimately that common ground, we believe, will be built on the foundation of a two-state solution. It may in fact be the best way to guarantee the security of Israel and the right of Palestinians to secure their own independent destiny. The words of President John F. Kennedy, uttered 60 years ago, stand tall even today, *"Let us not seek the Republican answer or the Democratic answer but the right answer. Let us not seek to fix the blame from the past. Let us accept our own responsibility for the future."*

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