



# The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights Stands in Solidarity with Student Protests and Encampments on University Campuses

## Participating Organizations

Alexandria for Palestine  
 Alliance of Baptists  
 American-Arab Anti-Discrimination Committee  
 American Muslims for Palestine  
 American Muslims for Palestine Richmond Chapter  
 Appalachian Peace Education Center  
 Arab American Association of Central Virginia  
 Central Atlantic Conference (UCC) Palestine/Israel Network  
 Defenders for Freedom, Justice, and Equality  
 Episcopal Peace Fellowship—National Capital Regional Chapter  
 Israel Palestine Mission Network of the Presbyterian Church - USA  
 Here4TheKids  
 Jewish Voice for Peace  
 National Arab American Women's Association  
 New Dominion PAC  
 Northern Virginians for Peace & Justice  
 Palestinian Christian Alliance for Peace  
 Plowshares Peace & Justice Center  
 Richmonders for Peace in Israel-Palestine  
 Unitarian Universalists for Justice in the Middle East, Northern Virginia Chapter  
 United Methodists for Kairos Response  
 US Campaign for Palestinian Rights  
 Washington Interfaith Alliance for Middle East Peace

**The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights (VCHR) stands in solidarity with university students across the United States and worldwide who are protesting against Israel's US-backed genocidal assault on Palestinians.** We are outraged that university administrations called in law enforcement to break up student encampments rather than support and protect students, and we condemn the violent police assaults and arrests of students exercising their right to assemble and protest.

**Over the past several weeks, students set up encampments on their campus grounds to draw greater attention to the Israeli assault on Palestinians and protest their respective university's support for the Zionist state of Israel.** Their protests have coalesced around the demand for universities to disclose and divest from investments in and partnerships that support Israel and to support the right of students to freely assemble and protest on their campuses.

**The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights supports these demands.** As a coalition of organizations that advocates for Palestinian human rights, we are grateful to the courageous leadership of students demanding their institutions divest from supporting the apartheid state of Israel.

Western governments, and most notably the United States, have provided continuous and substantial economic, political, and military support to Israel, without which Israel could not carry out its assault on Gaza and the West Bank or maintain its illegal occupation of the Palestinian territories or apartheid system. This support remains unwavering, despite sustained and unprecedented popular opposition to Israel and support for Palestinian liberation and despite copious documentation of Israel's violations of international law and specifically war crimes and credible and compelling evidence that Israel is committing genocide as assessed by the International Court of Justice. As we pressure the US government to end its support for Israel's genocidal assault, illegal occupation, and apartheid system, we are heartened by students courageously calling out their university administrations for complicity in genocide and demanding an end to their support for Israel.

We are appalled that some university administrations have called on police to dismantle the encampments, knowing as they do that police departments have a history of treating unarmed protesters as enemy insurgents, apparently forgetting that citizens in a democracy have the inalienable right to dissent and to express their thoughts freely without the fear of bodily harm. We note

that many police forces in the US are trained by Israeli military forces, and in many instances, we have seen that the tactics they employ on US campuses are the same as those used by Israeli forces in Palestine. We completely reject the replication of such practices on our campuses against our students, just as we reject the violence that the Israeli military and settlers inflict on Palestinians.

**We are mindful of the role the United States plays in fueling divisions and arming conflicts and repressive governments.** We must build alternatives to an economy in which war, death, and destruction are profitable and which depends on violence and the subjugation of populations to maintain its domination.

**Today students are giving a master class in responsible citizenship and solidarity with Palestinians who are fighting for liberation.** At the risk of arrest, expulsion, and doxing, students are justly protesting against the crimes committed by Israel and the U.S. and their universities' financial investments and academic support of Israel. The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights demands that students not be penalized by their universities for protesting against injustice; that they be supported for acting with moral courage and dedication to Palestinian freedom, as we continue to do all that we can to end Israel's illegal and unjust occupation and apartheid system and to support the full rights, dignity, self-determination, and freedom of Palestinians.

***The Virginia Coalition for Human Rights is committed to advocating for justice, peace, and human rights for all. We stand with the Palestinian people in their legitimate quest for freedom, dignity, and self-determination amid one of the gravest humanitarian crises of our times. Our collective moral and humanitarian obligation is to speak out against injustice and tirelessly work towards a future where peace and human rights are honored for the Palestinians in Gaza, all of occupied Palestine, and throughout the diaspora.***