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The Honorable Josh Shapiro

Governor of Pennsylvania
Office of the Governor
508 Main Capitol Building
Harrisburg, PA 17120

August 6, 2025

Dear Governor Shapiro,

On behalf of the Philadelphia and Pittsburgh chapters of the Council on American-Islamic Relations (CAIR-Pennsylvania), we write to both acknowledge and respond to your recent remarks regarding the dire humanitarian crisis in Gaza.

We welcome your public call for a dramatic increase in U.S. humanitarian aid to Gaza and your clear condemnation of the starvation facing civilians in the besieged territory. Your recognition that such suffering must end is a positive and much-needed step.

However, we must also express our concern with several aspects of your statement and urge immediate corrective action to ensure a more accurate, compassionate, and constructive public narrative.

Challenging the “Aid Theft” Justification for Starving Gaza

In your comments, you stated that it is “fair to say that ... Hamas intercepts aid.” However, extensive reporting and a recent U.S. government review have found no evidence of systematic or widespread aid theft by any Palestinian actors in Gaza.

Isolated incidents may have occurred, but the broad narrative suggesting significant diversion of U.N. aid is not supported by current facts. The truth is that the Israeli government has been openly and deliberately blocking aid trucks from entering Gaza for months. It is important to make it clear that there is no excuse or justification for the Israeli occupation's decision to block aid from entering Gaza, and it is important that elected officials to validate the Netanyahu government's false justifications.

We urge you to refrain from promoting claims that obscure the core causes of Gaza’s humanitarian catastrophe—namely, the ongoing blockade and occupation.

Source: [CNN – U.S. government review found no evidence of widespread Hamas theft of Gaza aid](https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/25/politics/us-government-review-no-evidence-widespread-hamas-theft-of-gaza-aid)
Link: [cnn.com/2025/07/25/politics/us-government-review-no-evidence-widespread-theft-gaza-aid](https://www.cnn.com/2025/07/25/politics/us-government-review-no-evidence-widespread-theft-gaza-aid)

On Compassion and Framing

You rightly noted that Prime Minister Netanyahu's denial of starvation in Gaza is "just wrong" and warned that such rhetoric "isolates Israel in the world." While this critique is valid, we are concerned that your framing centers Palestinian suffering primarily as a diplomatic liability for Israel rather than as a moral and humanitarian crisis deserving empathy on its own terms. The dignity, lives, and rights of Palestinians should matter not because of their impact on geopolitics but because of our shared humanity.

A Call for Dialogue with Pennsylvania's Palestinian Community

We also urge you to meet with Palestinian Pennsylvanians and advocacy organizations who have long raised serious concerns about your public discourse on this issue. Such a meeting would offer an opportunity for inclusive and transparent dialogue on topics such as:

- The harm caused by portraying Palestinians as terrorists;
- Respecting the First Amendment rights of those advocating for Palestinian lives and justice, including companies like Ben & Jerry's;
- Addressing the chilling effect your past rhetoric has had on student activists across the state;
- Establishing a clear and consistent stance against genocide and collective punishment;
- Repealing Pennsylvania's anti-boycott laws that infringe on constitutionally protected protest.

This kind of engagement is vital to fostering trust and promoting inclusive governance that reflects the concerns of all constituents.

Governor Shapiro, we urge you to reconsider your past positions on free speech and Palestinian human rights activism and demonstrate principled leadership rooted in justice, truth, and compassion. Our communities deserve nothing less.

Respectfully,

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