

ISLAMIC ORGANIZATION of NORTH AMERICA

For Immediate Release
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Metro Detroit Religious Leaders Call for Immediate End to Genocide in Gaza and Wayne State University's Divestment from Weapons Manufacturing



[Warren, MI] - Yesterday, July 15, a diverse group of religious leaders from across Metro Detroit gathered at the “W” sculpture of Wayne State University to address urgent issues:

1. The immediate end to the genocide in Gaza.
2. Wayne State’s complicity in genocide via their investments in weapons manufacturing.
3. Encouraging the University to take pride in the students’ righteous call for divestment in support of Palestinian lives.
4. Calling on Wayne State to refrain from the future use of militarized police and police brutality.

Imam Mustapha Elturk, Ameer of IONA, was among the religious leaders who gave a statement and offered a prayer. Other speakers included Rev. Bill Wylie-Kellermann of the Michigan Conference of the United Methodist Church, Pastor Paul Perez of the Central United Methodist Church – Detroit, Rev. Roslyn Bouier of Trinity-St. Mark’s, UCC, and Imam Mohammad Ali Elahi of the Islamic House of Wisdom.

Pastor Perez stated, “Together our traditions share a common wisdom and truth — that there is no peace without justice.” Imam Elahi praised the students protesting the ongoing ethnic cleansing and genocide in Gaza and condemned the brutal reactions of police dismantling the students’ encampment as “disgraceful and embarrassing for the nation.”

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Rev. Kellermann criticized the university's decision to dismantle the encampments and violently confront anti-war activists who were peacefully supporting Palestinians. In his remarks, Pastor Kellermann said, "It's possible to treat your own students and alumni not as enemies or outsiders, but as learned people of conscience worth listening to."

In his statement, Imam Elturk expressed collective outrage at the ongoing genocide in Gaza. "Nothing can justify Israel's relentless campaign of genocide against Gaza, which has resulted in the tragic loss of at least 40,000 Palestinian lives, more than half of whom are women and children. This figure does not even account for those still trapped under the rubble. The situation in Gaza is dire."

The faith and community leaders then led a service at the site of the student encampment, praying at the Spirit Rock for Wayne State University to divest from its current holdings in companies that profit from war and weapons manufacturing and for an end to the genocide in Gaza.

"It was disheartening to witness the sprinklers being turned on around the Spirit Rock lawn while clergy leaders and community members were circling it, singing, and praying." Imam Elturk remarked.

"This action seemed to be an intentional disruption, given the timing and the nature of our event.

Such actions are not in alignment with the values of respect and support for community expression that Wayne State University advocates," the Imam added.



The return to Spirit Rock for prayer represents the continued support for students in their activism against the ongoing genocide in Gaza and for a free Palestine.

Imam Elturk visited the Wayne State encampment, led the students in prayer, and gave a speech encouraging them to remain steadfast and continue their resolve in standing up for justice and the Palestinian cause.

On June 26, more than 60 religious and community leaders signed an open letter to Wayne State President Kimberly Andrews Espy, Provost Laurie Lauzon

In the name of Allah, the Compassionate, the Merciful

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Clabo, and the University's Board of Governors condemning their authorization of police violence against students and community members on May 26, 2024. The letter called on the University's leadership to take steps towards reconciliation with the students and meet their demands. Imam Elturk was among the signatories.

END

IONA's mission is to transform its members and help transform the surrounding communities to righteous, God-fearing people, who collectively strive for the highest moral standard and constantly seek forgiveness from our Creator to earn His pleasure. We seek His compassion and mercy in this life and in the hereafter. We rejuvenate our soul through internal struggle and spiritual exercise in worship of our creator God. The strength of our belief in God gives us the courage to establish good and forbid evil, thus promoting a system of justice for all mankind.

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