FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:

March 11, 2024

A Statement from the Burlington-Bethlehem-Arad Sister City Program

The Burlington-Bethlehem-Arad Sister City Program is deeply grieved and heartsick over the violence that is taking place in Palestine and Israel. To date, 1,200 Israelis, many of them civilians, were killed—and about 240 kidnapped—in the Hamas attacks in southern Israel, while 30,200 Palestinian civilians—the vast majority of them women and children—have been killed and 1.7 million people displaced by the Israeli military campaign in Gaza. In the Occupied West Bank, where our Sister City of Bethlehem is located, 412 Palestinians, including 106 children, have been killed by Israeli settlers and the Israeli military.¹

Each life lost is precious, and we mourn every one. We call upon Israel and Hamas to implement an immediate ceasefire to avoid additional civilian casualties. We call upon Hamas to release the hostages, including any remains, unconditionally. We call upon the international community to protect the Palestinians of Gaza from forced displacement.

As an organization that began in 1991 to promote understanding and friendship among the people of Palestine, Israel, and the United States, our sister city program works for peace based on the belief that ordinary people—despite borders, walls, and oceans—are citizens of the world who wish to live as equals in harmony with one another. One of our foundational principles is that we are all neighbors on this planet and that citizen diplomacy working community to community and people to people can have a lasting impact by building bridges, not walls.

Signed,
The Burlington-Bethlehem-Arad Sister City Program

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¹All casualty figures are from the United Nations Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs in the Occupied Palestinian Territory (www.ochaopt.org).