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*In order for me to write poetry that isn't political,  
I must listen to the birds  
and in order to hear the birds  
the warplanes must be silent.  
- Marwan Makhoul*

The Board of Belmont Against Racism (BAR) is making this public statement to call for an immediate long-term ceasefire to prevent further loss of life in Israel and occupied Palestine.

BAR condemns the violence of Hamas's October 7th attack. We call for the return of all hostages to their families. We call for an immediate end to the disproportionate and indiscriminate bombing across Gaza that has killed thousands of innocent children, women, and men, including hostages. Thousands more lives will be lost without a ceasefire, the restoration of basic necessities, and a massive influx of humanitarian aid, which then could allow diplomacy to achieve a just and lasting peace based on common humanity and equal rights for all.

BAR explicitly condemns all anti-Semitic, anti-Muslim, and anti-Arab acts or threats. We explicitly affirm the notion that safety, without discrimination, is a human right. We are concerned about how the ongoing catastrophe is affecting our community. Belmont community members have ties to Israel, Palestine, and the Arab world. We know that many of them are frightened, some for their very lives. They have witnessed the lives of people who look, speak, dress, or worship as they do being taken. Our neighbors have lost generations of family members in the violence. Our children are afraid to share their family histories in school.

BAR is committed to our work to end the structures and systems that enable such inhumanity and violence which directly impact our community, including White Supremacy and anti-Muslim, anti-Arab, and anti-Semitic biases. We urge our elected officials to call for an immediate and sustainable ceasefire to pursue diplomatic efforts to end the violence against the people of Gaza and the West Bank and to free all hostages. In turn, we commit to our work here in Belmont and Greater Boston through actions such as building space for those most impacted to come together to grieve and heal, supporting programming in our schools to make them both safe and inclusive for all students, and advocating through our community activism.

BAR wishes everyone in our community—a community of many colors, races, ethnicities, religions, genders, sexual orientations, backgrounds, and experiences—a safe and hope-filled holiday season; and we extend our deepest sympathy to those who are grieving and finding little to celebrate amidst the violence we are collectively witnessing.