



Re: A Plea for the Middle East

Layann Alhunaidi <layann.alhunaidi@palmbeachschools.org>
To: Erica Whitfield <erica.whitfield@palmbeachschools.org>
Cc: Board Office <boardoffice@palmbeachschools.org>, Superintendent Palm Beach <superintendent@palmbeachschools.org>

Mon, Nov 6, 2023 at 3:10 PM

Good Afternoon Erica,

I am a bit confused. In reference to my first email, I am imploring the school board to take action; I am not just voicing a concern. Does your thank you acknowledge that?

Thank you,

Layann Alhunaidi

On Fri, Nov 3, 2023 at 12:49 PM Erica Whitfield <erica.whitfield@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

Thank you.

On Thu, Nov 2, 2023 at 10:51 PM Layann Alhunaidi <layann.alhunaidi@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

Hi Erica,

Firstly, thank you for responding so quickly. I appreciate all that the Board does for our community and it means a lot to be heard out of the many emails I am sure the Board receives.

I personally do not know anyone at my school being targeted, especially since 90% of Greenacres Elementary's student population is hispanic. However, I hope this does not discount all the middle and high schools in Palm Beach County, with a curriculum that speaks on the history of Palestine/Israel (which I, myself was educated about as a student at Woodlands Middle School and Park Vista Community High School). Our community consists of many Muslim students, some of which are young girls who wear a hijab. As you can imagine, this can put those students in a more vulnerable position to prejudice amidst the ongoing devastation in Palestine.

The strong influence of social media around this topic, which includes a lot of information regarding Islam/Muslims, combined with the growing mind of teenagers, can make it more likely for people in our community to be easily misinformed and thus, susceptible to prejudice of Palestinians, Arabs and/or Muslims. In fact, in addition to the six-year old boy in Chicago, just a few hours after sending my original email it was reported that Talat Jehan Khan, a Muslim pediatrician in Texas, was stabbed to death outside her apartment on October 31st which is being investigated as a religiously motivated hate crime.

Superintendent Burke took just two-school days after October 7th to send October 10th's email, which I respect as a speedy acknowledgment as to prevent any prejudice in our schools. He showed his empathy for our community on October 10th stating, "Our hearts are with our students, staff, and families impacted." Respectfully, I am asking for the same preventative measures against prejudice and the public recognition and empathy for what the last 26 days of absolute devastation has, and still is, causing our community.

Respectfully and Sincerely,

Layann Alhunaidi

On Wed, Nov 1, 2023 at 4:23 PM Erica Whitfield <erica.whitfield@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

Thank you for your service to our community. The situation in the middle east is terrible and the trauma is awful. Do you feel that Palestinians in PBC are being targeted, especially in your school? I agree with you about this being an issue of humanity and I share your concern for all the people involved. Thank you for your advocacy.
Erica

On Wed, Nov 1, 2023 at 1:36 PM Layann Alhunaidi <layann.alhunaidi@palmbeachschools.org> wrote:

Good Afternoon Superintendent Burke and School Board Members,

I am an employee of Palm Beach School District and I am writing to you in regard to the ongoing devastation in the Middle East.

Mr. Burke, in your last email regarding the topic on October 10th, you reminded our District that “we stress the values of respect, tolerance, and inclusivity” and encouraged parents to engage in conversations with their children about the importance of respect, empathy, and the harmful consequences of prejudice. For this, I commend you.

However, the atrocities in Palestine, specifically Gaza have not stopped. Today marks the 25th day of constant bombardment on innocent Palestinian civilians with a death toll at over 8,000, of which 3,500 are children.

As an educator of our community’s children, I implore you to uphold the stress on the “values of respect, tolerance, and inclusivity” for the Palestinians in our community during this devastating time. Parents can only effectively engage in conversations with their children about the importance of respect, empathy, and the harmful consequences of prejudice if they understand that the Palestinian people in Gaza are being violently and indiscriminately massacred.

On October 14, Wadea Al-Fayoume, a six year-old boy, was stabbed 26 times at his home in Chicago by his family’s landlord as a result of hate crime due to the family being Muslim and Palestinian. Our community must be properly informed about the devastation happening to Palestinians to avoid such hate and evil.

In addition, I would like to make something very clear: The American voices speaking up for the freedom of Palestine and calling for a ceasefire, including countless Jewish voices, are voices for humanity. This is not a matter of religion, skin color, or race. This is a matter of humanity. We as humans are standing up for human rights.

Every morning for the last 25 days, I am waking up to first-hand accounts online of Palestinian civilians being killed. Palestinian parents crying out because their children were killed and dismembered by the bombing. Palestinian children crying out because their parents were killed. Doctors treating patients on the floor of hospitals with no anesthesia and no electricity, just the flashlight from a phone. I, amongst many Americans, Arab and non-Arab, mourn these losses and feel helpless and in awe at what we are witnessing.

So again, I am pleading with you to please publicly recognize the Palestinian community by speaking up for humanity and encourage our community to show understanding and empathy to the Palestinian people.

Respectfully and Sincerely,

Layann Alhunaidi

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Erica Whitfield
School Board Member, District 4
561-434-8139 (office)
Erica.Whitfield@palmbeachschools.org