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DYLAN NEWMAN | SPARTAN DAILY

Attendees hold candles in memory of Palestinian victims of the conflict between Hamas and Israel on Thursday night at Tower Lawn on San José State University's campus.

Students mourn Palestinian lives lost

By Dylan Newman
STAFF WRITER

Students for Justice in Palestine (SJP) held a candlelight vigil on Tower Lawn last Thursday with over 100 San José State community members in attendance honoring the lives lost overseas in Gaza amidst the Israel-Palestine conflict.

SJP is a campus-based non-profit organization that advocates for the human rights of Palestinians, according to the group's Instagram.

As of Oct. 30, more than 8,000 Palestinians, mostly children and women, have been killed since the war began on Oct. 7, according to an Associated Press article published on Monday.

A member of SJP, who asked to remain anonymous, said they were pleased with the amount of people who came to pay their respects at the vigil.

"(The vigil) gives students an opportunity to mourn the loss of either loved ones from their families, people they know in their country or just to show their support," they said.

Members in attendance were each given their own candle to light and hold while SJP's speakers led them through moments of silence.

The vigil lasted about 30 minutes, starting at dusk, growing dark by the end of the ceremony after numerous emotional speeches about losing Palestinian lives in the conflict, leaving nothing but candlelight illuminating the circle of people around the fountain on Tower Lawn.

One of the speakers who identifies herself as Nicole and is a member of SJP spoke out, crying while sharing words directed towards the people of Gaza.

"I am sorry that the world doesn't give you the compassion and sympathy that you deserve," she said. "I think about the martyrs every waking moment of my day and I dream about them at night. I dream that they were able to carry out a life with their loved ones . . . and can exist in a peaceful state with no occupation or apartheid."

Apartheid is a policy that is founded on the idea of separating people based on racial or ethnic criteria, according to a Cornell Law School webpage.

The people living in Palestinian territory, including the Gaza Strip and the West Bank, are separated by walls, roads and checkpoints, while having very little rights, according to a 2022 article published by United Nations News.

"How come I get to have this life and they don't?" Nicole said.

Donna Wallach, community member and former resident of Gaza of 15 years, said the Palestinian people living in occupied Palestine have very little rights on a human and civil level, and are not allowed to leave the confines of the borders.

"The only thing (Palestinians) can do freely is breathe and sometimes they can't even do that," Wallach said. "What war criminal, apartheid, colonial terrorist Israel has been doing since they got illegally established in 1947 is commit war crimes. Crimes against humanity and crimes against peace on a second by second basis against the Palestinians."

In 1947, the U.N. adopted Resolution 181, which divided Palestine into two states, one Jewish, and one Arab, according to a it's webpage.

Since then, the territory designated for Arabs or Palestinians has progressively shrunk, through a major displacement event known as the Nakba in 1960, where over 750,000 Palestinians were forced out of their homes by Israel, according to another U.N. webpage.

Wallach said in 2008, she raised money with 44 international volunteers, to head to Gaza on two fishing boats.

She said seven of them stayed with her in Gaza to provide humanitarian support.

Wallach said she and her colleagues named their actions as the Free Gaza Movement boats, where members of the International Solidarity Movement accompanied Palestinian fishermen into international waters.

They did this to keep the fishermen safe while they fished, according to a 2008 San Francisco Bay View article written by Wallach.

"We would accompany the fishermen on their boats, witnessing and documenting the Israeli Navy coming and shooting at Palestinians who are just trying to fish to provide food for the people of Gaza and to have a livelihood," Wallach said.

She said many Palestinian fishermen were shot and killed when they were trying to do their job.

Wallach said she watched Israeli soldiers target farmers and fishermen while they were not, as she and other volunteers were protected internationally.

She said she recalled a particular instance where she witnessed a Palestinian farmer receive open gunfire while sowing olive seeds.

"He was just throwing seeds out onto the ground and that's what we were doing to help," Wallach said. "The Israeli soldiers came and started shooting at us."

Maryam Ayadi, business administration senior and president of the Muslim Student Association at SJSU, led the group in a prayer for protection and healing to come to the Palestinians. After the vigil, she said the amount of people that showed up meant a lot to her.

"(The turnout) means that there are people that are supportive of this cause and especially in an area where you feel like speaking out can cause some negative backlash or anything of that sense," Ayadi said. "It definitely feels good to have that support."

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UPD talks safety and responses

By Lamar Moody
STAFF WRITER

San José State's University Police Department (UPD) and the SJSU community discussed crime trends, department updates and issues affecting the campus and surrounding area on Thursday in the Campus Village Two Multipurpose Room.

Housing Security Officer Benny Leung said the purpose of the meeting was to hear concerns from the community.

He said law enforcement and the community aren't currently on the best of terms, but these types of meetings are aimed to help rebuild that relationship between the two sides.

"Every month we host these types of meetings with the purpose of building a relationship with the community, hearing their concerns and fixing them as best as we can," Leung said. "Most UPD officers are current or used to be students at SJSU."

Leung said during events like this, campus police are able to explain services the department provides and are able to go into more detail about classes that can help with self defense or saving someone's life such as the "Stop the Bleed at UPD event."

He said these services can provide safety knowledge for students to use on their own and beyond the campus environment. Leung said these events also help UPD interact with students and create an overall feeling of comfortability.

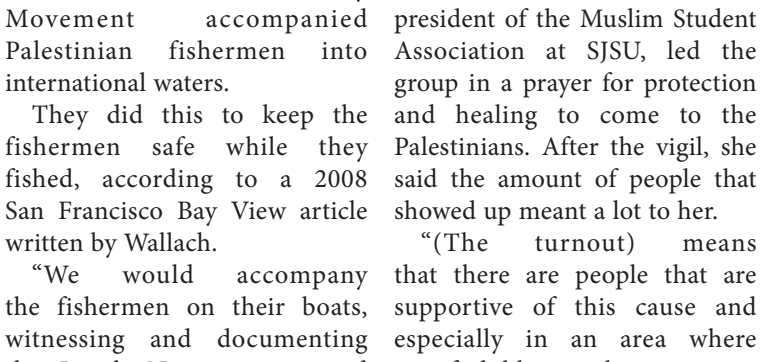
"The more familiar the officers are with the campus and the atmosphere of the students can help officers better serve the school with a new found confidence," said Leung.

UPD Administrative Captain Michael Santos said the monthly meetings are usually held at the Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Library, but moved Thursday's meeting to Campus Village Two to make it more convenient for students to attend.

Santos said the meeting was focused on housing issues and disturbances happening in the residence halls, as there has been a regular report of incidents around the area.

"Hopefully we can come up with a better way to get responses from the students, so we can tailor our services to what the community actually wants," Santos said.

UPD Sergeant Chris Zonsius said there has been a trend of homeless people walking through campus attempting to enter various housing buildings.



LAMAR MOODY | SPARTAN DAILY

University Police Department's Sergeant Chris Zonsius introduces two other officers during the event on Thursday afternoon on campus

Zonsius said there have been many occasions where housing staff members would report incidents of people "who don't look like students" walking through the dorms. He said most of the suspects they catch trespassing have records

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