



Statement on the Ongoing Anti-Government Protests in Tel Aviv

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The Lemkin Institute affirms its unwavering solidarity and support for individuals worldwide who courageously resist and condemn genocide. On January 19, a few hundred protesters gathered in Tel Aviv to call for a ceasefire. On February 3rd, 2023, thousands of protesters gathered in Habima Square in Tel Aviv to denounce Netanyahu and call for an end to the war. The protesters have called for the dissolution of the Israeli government, the resignation of Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu, and the initiation of new elections. Additionally, the protesters advocated for the release of over 130 hostages that have been held in Gaza for the last 120 days, expressing concern amid indications that ceasefire negotiations are likely to fail. The uncertain prospects of a ceasefire agreement leave the fate of the hostages in limbo, particularly given Prime Minister Netanyahu's refusal to consider their release, opting instead for Israeli domination at the cost of the lives of the hostages.

At the end of last month, Hamas officials stated that they had received a new proposal for a ceasefire after mediation efforts from the United States, Egypt, and Qatar. The proposal includes Hamas releasing hostages captured on October 7th, starting with civilians, then soldiers, and then the bodies of killed hostages in exchange for Palestinians held in detention by Israel, a ceasefire, and Israel taking steps to end the war. However, Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu has affirmed that he will not pull troops from Gaza until Israel has completely eradicated Hamas, stating "We will not compromise on anything less than total victory." Netanyahu's hard stance on what it would take to end the genocide has caused growing frustration among Israelis on how their government has handled the war, reflected by the increase in domestic protests.

Netanyahu's use of the term "total victory" may be a reference to US President Harry Truman's radio address to the American armed forces on September 2, 1945, also known as his "Total Victory" speech, where he proclaimed that "[t]he war, to which we have devoted all the resources and all the energy of our country for more than three and a half years, has now produced **total victory** over all our enemies." The Lemkin Institute wishes to remind the world of the link between the goal of "total victory" and genocide. Truman's speech was made at the end of a war that included the use of nuclear weapons against the Japanese cities of Hiroshima and Nagasaki, which alone killed an estimated 110,000 to 210,000 Japanese civilians, a decision

that would be a clear war crime today and, according to some scholars, also amounts to the crime of genocide. In the ancient world, Rome pursued total victory against Carthage, resulting in genocide. More recently, Germany's military strategy of "absolute destruction" is implicated in the genocides of the Herero and Nama peoples between 1904 and World War I and the genocide of Armenians in World War I. During the Holocaust, the Nazis frequently celebrated "victory" over "the Jews," a victory that was enshrined in another totalizing project, the "Final Solution." Just over the past few years Azerbaijan's President, Ilham Aliyev, tied his country's honor and future to the idea of a "total victory" over the Armenian Republic of Artsakh. This led to the forced removal of the entire indigenous population in the enclave, which was over 99 percent Armenian. The pursuit of "total victories" over "enemy populations" frequently results in genocide.

The Lemkin Institute strongly supports the Israeli people's brave acts of protest against Netanyahu's government. In an ongoing genocide, all those who can stand up to genocidal powers must do so, but it is particularly daunting to stand up to one's own government. Since October 7, Israel has been cracking down on speech, fighting a "war inside of a war," as one government official put it. This crackdown mostly targets Palestinian citizens of Israel, but has expanded to include anyone opposing the state narrative. Fueled by tips from ordinary Israelis, Israeli police have arrested, detained and tried both Palestinians and Jews inside Israel who call for a ceasefire or express horror at the murder of Palestinians in Gaza. The Lemkin Institute will continue to affirm the Israeli people's right to protest against their government and its genocide in the Gaza Strip and the occupied West Bank. Protesting for peace – an essential component of genocide prevention work – must never be criminalized.