

Mayor's Statement
November 2, 2023

I write today as your Mayor with a heavy heart over the situation in Israel and Gaza. The October 7th terrorist attacks by Hamas on innocent Israeli civilians, including the elderly and many children, even infants, horrified me and represent, to my mind, the absolute worst of humanity. To be clear, there was positively no justification for the massacre committed by Hamas of over 1400 innocent human beings. Like each of you, I was saddened beyond belief, and thoroughly sickened, by the brutal acts of violence, inhumanity, and terror of that awful day. And I hope, regardless of our personal backgrounds, that we can stand together to call out those who have attempted to excuse – or even worse – celebrate the inexplicable atrocities that took place as well as those who depravedly blame the innocent victims for their own terrible suffering.

At the same time, my heart also aches for the innocent civilians in Gaza, who, in the nearly four weeks since, have undergone daily bombardment and are experiencing increasingly desperate conditions with the loss of life now numbering in the thousands, including an alarmingly high proportion of children. The residents of Gaza deserve to live in peace and prosperity too, and I can only pray that the current tragic suffering and death of innocent Palestinians quickly ends, and that a better future may soon be realized for all. Here again, regardless of our personal backgrounds, it is my hope that we can come together in calling for a cessation of harm to innocent Gazans and a reinstatement of sufficient access to food, medicine, shelter, and safe drinking water.

I am proud that Chatham is a diverse community and that our heterogeneity has grown ever greater in recent years. As President Biden emphasized in his speech to the nation on October 10th, we must endeavor to stand firmly with each other against any and all efforts to divide us through anti-Semitism, anti-Arabism, Islamophobia, or other forms of bigotry and hatred. The events now taking place in the Middle East have the potential to inflame passions elsewhere, including right here in New Jersey. No one knows how long this conflict will continue, but there could be difficult weeks ahead. As such, if anyone in the Borough feels threatened by the actions of another in relation to his or her race, religion, or heritage, it should be reported immediately to the Chatham Borough Police. I can assure you that prompt measures will be taken to investigate the matter, and, if necessary, to pursue appropriate legal action.

I will close on a more hopeful note. In January 2021, under my direction, Chatham Borough created the Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion Advisory Committee. Its genesis, in part, was a 2017 Council Resolution declaring the Borough to be a “welcoming community.” The thought behind this move was that matching the language and intention of the latter with a commitment to achieving substantive results would go a long way towards embracing Chatham’s growing diversity while strengthening its overall sense of community. Such “unity in diversity,” it was hoped, would sooner emerge as a characteristic feature of this special and enlightened place we all call home. It is in trying times like these, I believe, that this burgeoning commitment to the status of a welcoming community becomes especially important. I should tell you that I have every confidence in Chatham’s ability to shine brightly in this regard.

Wishing you all peace and harmony,

Mayor Thaddeus J. Kobylarz