

Dear Council members,

My name is Samia Farouk and I live in Montgomery County, District 2. I have been a resident of this county for the past 30 years. I am testifying today to urge Montgomery county to end all grants to Maryland Israel Development Center.

Personally I am shocked to learn that my own county is funding and aiding with our taxpayer dollars to help commit war crimes. I am also angry at myself for trusting our leaders who should have our best interests in mind when deciding the budget, but instead helping a foreign country.

I work in an elementary school, watching the kids in my school reminds me everyday of the children of Gaza. I see the happy faces and their small bodies and I picture the small bodies and faces of the children buried under the rubbles of the building we helped demolish. How can we pretend to care for our children here and at the same time help with the slaughter of children in Gaza. I have community members who have lost their entire families to this genocide. The past 16 months were extremely difficult for me and it should also disturb each one of you. The images coming out of Gaza are heartbreaking. Every day is worse than the previous one. Should I mention the video of Palestinian people who flew up in the air with the sheer force of the bomb explosion or should I mention Hind Rajab who was shot 355 times. I can go and on with examples. And every day I feel helpless and unable to do something for the people's suffering. As I mentioned I work in an elementary school and the number of FARM kids are increasing every year. We have homeless kids in our school. You don't realize how difficult it is to teach and engage a student in learning if they don't have food security or don't have a proper home.

My ask today for the council members is to halt all future grants to MIDC. It is a system that is engaged in directly investing in weapons used in Gaza. Why can't we invest that money in our own county? As Montgomery county council members you hold power to serve and bring changes in our communities. Please use your power and influence responsibly by stopping all future funds and grants to MIDC and use these funds to support and aid our children.