

Palestine  Israel

The Problem With The Word

“Ceasefire”

Language Matters

Version 1.2

The Problem
With The Word
“Ceasefire”

Language Matters

Words are not neutral; they shape our understanding of events, define narratives, and influence outcomes. In the context of war, oppression, and systemic injustice, language is often weaponized to obscure truth, shift blame, and sanitize harm. One such example is the use of the term “ceasefire.”

The Problem
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Neutralizing Responsibility

“Ceasefire” suggests a mutual and equal agreement between two parties to temporarily halt hostilities. It implies a symmetrical conflict in which both sides are equally responsible for the violence and equally capable of stopping it.

However, this framing is deeply misleading in contexts where power is profoundly asymmetrical.

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Masking Structural Violence

The term narrowly focuses on the suspension of direct physical violence while ignoring ongoing structural and systemic violence, such as blockades, apartheid policies, or occupation. A “ceasefire” might stop the bombs but leave the systems of oppression fully intact.

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**Legitimizing
Harm**

Declaring a ceasefire after one side has devastated the other creates the illusion of peace while the harm remains unresolved. It allows perpetrators to portray themselves as peacemakers, obscuring their role in causing the destruction in the first place.

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A Nuclear Power vs. an Occupied Population

One side wields a highly advanced national military, including nuclear capabilities (widely believed to exist, though undeclared), while the other is a stateless, occupied population living under siege.

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Global Superpower Backing

The occupying power is supported by the United States, the world’s largest superpower, which provides billions of dollars in military aid annually, including advanced weaponry, diplomatic cover, and veto power in international forums.

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**Disparity in
Resources and
Impact**

The disparity in military strength, resources, and global influence results in vastly disproportionate destruction and loss of life. The occupying power maintains international legitimacy and the infrastructure to rebuild and sustain its war efforts.

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By framing these dynamics as a “conflict” between two equals, the term “ceasefire” erases these fundamental asymmetries. It shifts focus away from the systemic oppression and disproportionate power wielded by one side, equating the actions of the oppressor with the resistance of the oppressed.

Language matters because it frames how we understand conflict and justice. To call for a “ceasefire” is to accept a false narrative of equality between oppressor and oppressed, erasing responsibility and perpetuating injustice. Instead, we must demand language that exposes the asymmetry of power, centers accountability, and lays the foundation for a peace rooted in justice and liberation.

Language To Use Instead

To align with the principles of justice and truth, we must reject terms, like **"ceasefire,"** that obscure responsibility and asymmetry. Instead, we must adopt language that reflects the reality of power dynamics and centers accountability.

"End The Occupation": By addressing the root causes of violence, this language emphasizes dismantling the systems that sustain harm.

"Justice and Accountability": Rather than framing peace as the mere absence of violence, this language highlights the need for reparations, systemic change, and lasting solutions.

"Stop the Genocide": That's it.

These examples communicate more precisely and present a stark contrast to "ceasefire" as a plea for both sides to settle down and get along.