

ALA Council Committee Report Form

TO: ALA Council

DATE: January 17, 2024

RE: *(select one)*

ACTION REQUESTED

INFORMATION

REPORT

ACTION REQUESTED/INFORMATION/REPORT:

Action requested from Councilors is to cast their vote to:

**Resolution on Damage and Destruction of Libraries and other Cultural
Institutions in Gaza**

ACTION REQUESTED BY: International Relations Committee

CONTACT PERSON: IRC Chair, Julius C. Jefferson, Jr.

STAFF LIAISON CONTACT: Michael Dowling

BACKGROUND:

International Membership

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International membership has grown over the past year by 5% with the reduced member rate, and there are now 1,529 international librarians and libraries from eighty-nine countries that are members of ALA. The IRC and the International Relations Office (IRO) continue to work with Membership, Conference Services, and other units to promote membership, engagement, and participation in the Annual Conference in San Diego and other events.

IFLA

On October 3, IFLA members were informed that Dubai had withdrawn the invitation to hold the 2024 World Library and Information Congress (WLIC) in Dubai. With no viable alternative IFLA has cancelled WLIC 2024. IFLA is currently seeking 'Expressions of Interest' to host the WLIC 2025. President Emily Drabinski represented ALA at the WLIC 2023 in Rotterdam, Netherlands, August 21-25. Over 250 librarians from the United States participated. The ALA exhibit booth provided all attendees with information on ALA membership, products, and services. Past President Loida Garcia-Febo was re-elected as Chair of the Management of Library Association Section (MLAS) and continues as a member of the IFLA Governing Board in that role. Forty other ALA members from the U.S. are now serving on various section and advisory committees. IFLA's North America Regional Division (NARD) is now led by Diane Koen from Canada with Evviva Weinraub from the U.S. as vice-chair. The NARD is updating the action plan, planning to meet at ALA annual and will be presenting with U.S. members at the Ontario Library Association Super Conference in Toronto next week.

10th Sharjah International Book Fair

ALA, the Sharjah Book Authority, and Combined Book Exhibit celebrated the 10th year of the Sharjah International Library Conference. Two hundred twenty-nine librarians and others from twelve countries participated in this year's conference, November 7-9. ALA President Emily Drabinski provided the keynote, which was held in conjunction with the 42nd Sharjah International Book Fair. With the upcoming Arabic version of RDA coming soon a preconference was held for librarians and staff from galleries, archives, and museums interested in applying linked open data to their catalogs. Conference session topics included intelligence, sustainability, AASL Standards-Based Learning Series, Libraries Build Business initiative, fostering library scholarship, and bibliotherapy.

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25th ALA-FIL Free-Pass Program to Guadalajara Book Fair

Another ALA international focused partner program also celebrated a milestone. One hundred and thirty-four ALA members from twenty-two states and the District of Columbia took advantage of the ALA-FIL Free Program to attend the Guadalajara Book Fair (FIL) at the end of November. The Guadalajara Book Fair is the largest Spanish- language Book Fair in the world and provides an opportunity for librarians to review and select books and other resources for their Spanish language users. The Fair provides firsthand access to the latest publications in Spanish and over 300,000 titles from 1,500 publishers from over thirty-five countries.

Webinars

The International Relations Round Table (IRRT) with support from the International Relations Office (IRO) hosted three international focused webinars in the fall of 2023. September's webinar was 'Library services to indigenous populations worldwide: rebuilding trust and reigniting global solidarity' with October's focus on library consortia in Indian Institutes of Management (IIM) libraries consortium: a pioneering journey in cooperative acquisitions and knowledge sharing.' December's webinar was presented in Spanish 'Liberando oportunidades: los beneficios de asistir a la conferencia anual de la Asociación de Bibliotecas de los Estados Unidos (ALA) | Unlocking Opportunities: The Benefits of Attending the ALA Conference.'

IRRT 75th Anniversary

The International Relations Round Table was established back in 1949 as the Round Table on Library Service Abroad. It is celebrating its 75th anniversary this year and has embarked on a new endowment effort that will provide going forward two scholarships for one U.S. member and one international member support to attend the ALA Annual Conference each year.

American Library in Paris

Maggie Farrell, ALA Representative to the Library Board of Trustees of the [American Library in Paris](#), reported that library has rebounded from the COVID pandemic and last year hosted 270 events. Membership is up and operations and funding is on solid ground. Noted author Andrew Sean Greer was the featured speaker at this year's Gala. And Past ALA Representative Damon Austin has been added as a new Board member. The Library will be receiving a historic gift in

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the near future which will greatly enhance its endowment for more strategic initiatives including expanding the reach and scale of programming.

ACTION REQUESTED

Resolution on Damage and Destruction of Libraries and other Cultural Institutions in Gaza

Whereas, in the attack by Hamas on Israel on October 7, 2023, 1,200 lost their lives and hostages were taken, with many of them still held (1);

Whereas, the response by Israel in Gaza has resulted in over 24,000 lives lost so far, and a humanitarian crisis (2);

Whereas, on October 24, 2023, the International Federation of Library Associations and Institutions (IFLA) sent an ‘Appeal for Respect for Human Rights, Cultural Conventions in Gaza and Israel’ imploring all parties to uphold respect for human rights and dignity, in line with international law, and find a pathway to peace, and ensure humanitarian aid (3);

Whereas, the American Library Association (ALA) “deplores the destruction of libraries, library collections, and property, and the disruption of educational process by that act, whether it be done by individuals or groups of individuals, and whether it be done in the name of honest dissent, the desire to control or limit thought or ideas, or for any other purpose,” (ALA Policy B.2.8) (4);

Whereas, during the current Israel-Hamas War, the Gaza Municipal Library and its library for children; the Diana Tamari Sabbagh Library, the Rashid al-Shawa Cultural Center, and other cultural institutions have been heavily damaged or destroyed (5);

Whereas, Policy B.2.8 was created in 1971 and in the last thirty-five years ALA has passed resolutions deploring the destruction of libraries and cultural resources during times of war in

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Ukraine, Iraq, Bosnia, Yugoslavia, Kosovo, and in previous conflict in Israel and Gaza (6), therefore be it

Resolved that the American Library Association,

1. Implores all parties to uphold respect for human rights and dignity in line with international law, ensure access to humanitarian aid, and find a pathway to peace,
2. Deplores the destruction and damage of the Gaza Municipal Library, the Rashid al-Shawa Cultural Center, and other libraries and cultural institutions in Gaza;
3. Calls for the protection of libraries, schools, and other cultural institutions in Gaza and Israel and for both sides of the conflict to uphold the 1954 Hague Convention for the Protection of Cultural Property in the Event of Armed Conflict to take all feasible action to safeguard and respect all cultural property;
4. Urges the government of the United States, as well as other governments, intergovernmental organizations, and nongovernmental organizations to provide assistance for the reconstruction and restoration of libraries, schools, and other cultural institutions, including networking and other infrastructure, as soon as it is practicable in Gaza.

(1) Hamas command in north Gaza destroyed, Israel says, BBC, January 7, 2024 [https://www.bbc.com/news/world-](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67904259)

[middle-east-67904259](https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-67904259)

(2) Israel Gaza war: Deal reached on aid to Gaza, including to hostages, BBC, January 17, <https://www.bbc.com/news/world-middle-east-68000227>

(3) Appeal for Respect for Human Rights, Cultural Conventions in Gaza and Israel, IFLA, October 23, 2023 <https://www.ifla.org/news/gaza-israel-appeal/#:~:text=We%20implore%20all%20parties%20to,the%20face%20of%20this%20conflict>

(4) ALA Policy Manual <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/governance/policymanual>

(5) Gazans mourn loss of their libraries: Cultural beacons and communal spaces. Washington Post, December 1, 2023 <https://www.washingtonpost.com/world/2023/11/30/gaza-library-palestinian-culture/>

(6) ALA International Resolutions, <https://www.ala.org/aboutala/offices/iro/awardsactivities/international>

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Approved by ALA International Relations Committee, January 17, 2024

Respectfully submitted,

ALA International Relations Committee

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