



**Mennonite
Church
Alberta**

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November 17, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

cc: The Honourable Melanie Joly, P.C., M.P.
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister:

As leaders in what are often called the historic peace churches, we are deeply concerned about the current situation in Israel-Palestine. As citizens of Canada we come with several requests of our government and our elected representatives.

We wholeheartedly reject the violence that has occurred since October 7th in Israel and Gaza. We feel the pain of Israelis and Palestinians. We seek to uplift the shared humanity of all. We recognize the ongoing trauma on all sides. We grieve with all those who have lost loved ones and whose safety and security has been harmed. We pray for peace to come to the Holy Land shared among the three great Abrahamic faiths.

In keeping with statements made by the leaders of the Mennonite World Conference, we appeal to Palestinian militants to cease their assault on Israelis, release hostages, and seek nonviolent ways to address their just concerns.

We also appeal to the Israeli government to cease their current assault on Gaza and the West Bank, and begin to redress the decades of occupation and dispossession perpetuated upon the Palestinian people.

War is too brutal a tool to bring peace. We believe that all people share the inherent dignity that comes with being creatures of the Creator, and are thus equal, and worthy of equal consideration. But violence, even in self-defence, destroys the dignity of the human being created in the image of God. As Gandhi said, an eye for an eye leads to blindness.

We insist a way must be found other than the vengeful and devastating means Israel is using now, under the blessing of Canada and other allies.

We call on Canada to:

- Embark on a diplomatic and international relations path that calls both Israel and Palestinian governments and authorities to reject any sort of escalation of violence, to recognize the legitimacy of both a Palestinian and Israeli state within the contested territories, and to establish a just peace recognizing the rights of all people to a peaceful co-existence;
- Explicitly call for a ceasefire, and not to refer to Israel having a unilateral right to self-defence;
- Actively support and work to facilitate humanitarian efforts such as delivering food, water, medicine and other essential supplies for the desperate situation in Gaza;
- Operate in its historic role as a respected “middle power,” comparable to the way Norway did in brokering the initial stages of the Oslo Accords;
- Avoid being drawn into this particular conflict – even in a support role as weapons supplier or apologist – similar to the way Canada kept itself from being drawn into the war in Iraq;
- Recognize and validate the trauma among Canadians of both Jewish and Palestinian backgrounds (acknowledging the latter includes Christians and Muslims).

To summarize, we wish for Canada to engage in and advocate for an active form of peacemaking that seeks long-term solutions to the decades of suffering by the people of Gaza and of the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem, so that Israelis and Palestinians can negotiate ways to live together in the land.

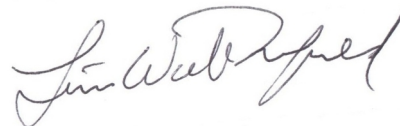
All violence is in a context. In this case, the context includes decades of repression and oppression. This does not excuse the violence on either side, but it points to the need for careful responses by the Canadian government that contribute to peacemaking and a more just future. The status quo is not viable. Violence begets violence. A sustainable, lasting, and just peace in Israel-Palestine should be the goal of the Canadian government.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our concerns and encourage fruitful action for peacemaking. We would like a response as to what the government will do for a peaceful and just resolution of this conflict.

Sincerely,



Brenda Tiessen-Wiens
Moderator



Tim Wiebe-Neufeld
Executive Minister