

# The Presbyterian Church in Canada L'Église presbytérienne au Canada

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MODERATOR OF THE 2017 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Rev. Peter Bush

Friday, May 25, 2018

The Hon. Chrystia Freeland, M.P. P.C.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Chrystia.Freeland@parl.gc.ca

Dear Minister,

I write you regarding the events along the Gaza-Israel border. To date Israeli soldiers have shot and killed over 100 Palestinians and thousands more have been wounded or maimed including 3,500 wounded by live ammunition.

Like all states, Israel has the right and the responsibility to defend its borders and to protect its citizens; this is not in dispute. It is difficult however, to understand how Israel's response is proportionate to the activities by Palestinians along the border.

Some Palestinians have thrown rocks at Israeli soldiers and there are reports that some have thrown Molotov cocktails. The Government of Israel has not reported that any Israeli soldier has been threatened by a Palestinian with a firearm.

The United Nations Basic Principles on the Use of Force and Firearms by Law Enforcement Officials hold that security forces shall "apply non-violent means before resorting to the use of force and firearms," and that "whenever the lawful use of force and firearms is unavoidable, law enforcement officials shall: (a) Exercise restraint in such use and act in proportion to the seriousness of the offence and the legitimate objective to be achieved; (b) Minimize damage and injury, and respect and preserve human life." Furthermore, "intentional lethal use of firearms may only be made when strictly unavoidable in order to protect life."

Just as every state has the right and the responsibility to defend its borders and protect its citizens, no state is exempt from respecting international law, including Israel.

On May 18, the United Nations Council on Human Rights voted to establish a Commission of Inquiry to investigate allegations of abuses and violations. Canada is not a member of the Council though it did express its concern that the inquiry would only focus on allegations against Israel. The President of the Council will appoint a Commission of Inquiry with the mandate to investigate allegations of abuses and violations by all parties and will not be restricted to one party, namely Israel.

I trust that the Government of Canada will encourage the Government of Israel to cooperate with the Commission of Inquiry.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada laments the loss of all lives. Each life lost whether it is a Palestinian or an Israeli is to be mourned. Each life lost further diminishes the prospects for peace with justice. Each life lost renders reconciliation ever more difficult.

Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Stephen Kendall and The Rev. Donald Muir

The Presbyterian Church in Canada welcomes initiatives by the Government of Canada that support peace with justice between Israel and Palestine.

Rest assured of our continuing prayers.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Peter Bush". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Peter" and last name "Bush" clearly distinguishable.

The Rev. Peter G. Bush,  
Moderator,  
143rd General Assembly,  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada