

December 18, 2020
The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
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Special Envoy to monitor and report on the treatment of Palestinian children

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

The Presbyterian Church in Canada sends greetings. As we approach Christmas, traditionally a time of joy in the Christian liturgical year, we confess to remaining deeply concerned about the situation in the area where the first Christmas took place—and particularly, regarding the wellbeing of Palestinian children living under decades of Israeli military occupation.

We have recently heard of the life and death of Ali Abu Alia, a Palestinian child who was shot and killed by an Israeli soldier in his hometown of Al-Mughayir in the occupied West Bank on December 4, 2020. Ali's death—killed on the day of his fifteenth birthday—is not an isolated incident. Eight Palestinian children have been killed in this year alone, the results of Israeli military and illegal settler action. And in the last twenty years, a total of 2,120 Palestinian children have been killed.¹

Each one of these children was a member of a family who grieves them, with friends who keenly feel their loss. Each death brought increased trauma to communities desperately in need of healing. Every one of those children were entitled to the protections guaranteed under the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and under the Fourth Geneva Convention, treaties to which both Israel and Canada are signatories with obligations to uphold. All the children that remain are entitled to those same protections, which must be upheld if the violence and trauma of these deaths is to be ended.

In July of this year, 2020, we wrote to The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, requesting that the Government of Canada appoint a special envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian territory: specifically undertaking an evaluative analysis of Israeli military law and practice as they affect Palestinian children in the West Bank by reference to the standards of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the Convention on the Rights of the Child and other applicable international law, and requesting that Global Affairs Canada officials in Ramallah and Tel Aviv develop links with Defense for Children International–Palestine and attend military court sessions involving children. These actions followed our endorsement of the No Way To Treat A Child campaign (<https://www.nwttac.canada.dci-palestine.org/>) at our 2019 General Assembly.

We know as well that The Presbyterian Church in Canada was not alone in calling for and taking these actions: many Canadians have phoned, written numerous letters, visited with members of Parliament, and petitioned the Government of Canada to appoint a Special Envoy to monitor and report on the situation of Palestinian children held in Israeli military detention. On November 20th, Petition E-2667 signed by over 2,400 Canadians was presented in the House of Commons

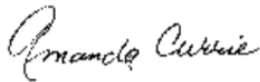
¹ Defense for Children International, Palestine: see https://www.dci-palestine.org/child_fatalities_by_month

by Nanaimo-Ladysmith MP Paul Manly, calling upon “*the **Government of Canada** to ensure the human rights of Palestinian children are protected by instructing a Special Envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the occupied Palestinian Territory and Gaza.*” This petition follows on the many visits and letters to elected officials with the same request over the years.

In light of continuing deaths that are in clear contravention of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, we join with other churches and with Canadians across the nation to urge the government to respond quickly to this request so that no more Palestinian children become names on the growing list of fatal statistics.

We look forward to your favourable response. Please rest assured of our prayers for your leadership in these difficult times.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator
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