



MODERATOR OF THE 2019 GENERAL ASSEMBLY
The Rev. Amanda Currie, B.A.Sc., M.Div.

November 6, 2020

The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.
Minister for Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6
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Dear Minister,

The Presbyterian Church in Canada sends greetings. We are writing due to developments in the Nagorno-Karabakh region of the Southern Caucasus between Armenia and Azerbaijan which we feel are cause for a great deal of concern. The latest conflict in Nagorno-Karabakh – also known as Artsakh, which in recent years has been governed independently with a view to self-determination by ethnic Armenians who live and have lived in the region for centuries – began nearly one month ago and has already demonstrated the vast and terribly destructive effects of today's weapons of war. We see reports of civilian deaths; displaced peoples; the destruction of property and livelihoods; reliving historic trauma, past injustices and even genocide; and weaponizing interreligious and interethnic differences. War and weapons cannot be the answer.

We believe that Canada must play a positive role in working to end the conflict, leading and participating robustly in diplomatic efforts. We also welcome the recent action taken to investigate the use of Canadian technology in the military conflict and consequently to suspend export permits. We must abide by our obligations under the United Nations Arms Trade Treaty and we call on the Government of Canada to continue doing so.

As a church with a long history of supporting peace and human rights, we call and pray for peace in the region. We join with Interim General Secretary of the World Council of Churches the Rev. Prof. Dr Ioan Sauca to "... condemn any targeted attack on one another's religious and cultural sites... and to pray and hope that religious leaders and institutions, together with decision makers, can join together in concerted efforts for an end to this conflict, for the protection of every human life, for the promotion of interreligious understanding and respect for each others' communities and holy places, and in cooperation for peace, justice and human dignity." We also call for and pray that ceasefire agreements are upheld; that all military actions end; that the highest value is placed on human life; and that ultimately human rights – including the right to self-determination and peace – are advanced. We ask as well that the Government of Canada take similar action, working through available international channels to call for the ceasefire to be upheld and for human rights to be respected.

Thank you for your attention to this matter, and we look forward to your response. Meanwhile, please rest assured of our prayers for your work as well as the work of all your colleagues.

Sincerely,

The Rev. Amanda Currie
Moderator
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

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