



May 21, 2021

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P. Prime Minister of Canada  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6  
[Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca)

### **Violence in Gaza and surrounding areas**

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau:

The most recent violence between the government of Israel and Hamas has killed at least 227 people—mostly Palestinians, including 64 children—and injured 1,620 people in Gaza. At least 12 Israelis have also been killed, including 2 children. This most recent conflict in Gaza was triggered after the violent suppression of peaceful protests by Palestinians against evictions, in violation of international law, of Palestinian families in the Sheikh Jarrah neighborhood of East Jerusalem.

The Presbyterian Church in Canada supports a just peace in the region that includes a two-state solution where all can live in peace and security. We also condemn all acts of hate or intimidation that target any peoples or communities not only abroad but here in Canada as well. We applaud your call on May 18 for a cease fire and your pledge to work with the international community to de-escalate the situation. We are glad to hear a ceasefire has just been reached, and pray it will be respected. The number of civilians, and especially children, killed is unacceptable and in clear violation of international law.

Canada places a high value on human rights and international law. The illegal situation in Sheikh Jarrah and Silwan that was the proximate flashpoint for this latest violence demands a response based on our commitment to international laws. The Presbyterian Church in Canada has previously written the Government of Canada requesting that it pressure the Government of Israel to live up to its responsibilities and obligations under international law and treaty obligations and we renew our call to do so.

Canada also has responsibilities and obligations under international law and treaties, and we wish to raise some of them here, especially regarding arms sales and human rights abuses. As early as 2006, The Presbyterian Church in Canada wrote the federal government requesting that it work with other like-minded states to adopt global transfer principles that would prevent the shipment of small arms to countries at war or where there are serious human rights violations, or to countries in which such arms are likely to undermine security and development efforts.<sup>1</sup> The Presbyterian Church in Canada recognizes there can be no peace without justice and that economic advocacy is a non-violent action that may contribute to peaceful change.<sup>2</sup> Given the ways in which the Government of Israel is currently violating international conventions and treaties on human rights, and given Canada's obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty to which we are a signatory, we call on the government to reconsider all arms trade with Israel until they have demonstrated consistently to the international community that such arms will not be used in human rights abuses or to undermine security and

<sup>1</sup> Acts and Proceedings of The Presbyterian Church in Canada 2006, pp. 286, 21.

<sup>2</sup> Acts and Proceedings of The Presbyterian Church in Canada 1991, pp. 299-331, 56-57 and 2003, pp. 298-309, 15.

development efforts. A ceasefire is good, but it is not enough to demonstrate that arms would not be used again for human rights abuses.

Additionally, The Presbyterian Church in Canada also affirms along with the United Nations Declaration on the Rights of Indigenous Peoples that all doctrines, policies and practices based on or advocating for superiority of peoples or individuals on the basis of national origin or racial, religious, ethnic or cultural differences are racist, scientifically false, legally invalid, morally condemnable and socially unjust.<sup>3</sup> The practices the Government of Israel has put into place during its years of occupation that place barriers to access of medical care, food, clean water, and other necessities to Palestinians are such policies and practices, and we are therefore moved to condemn them and call for them to be changed. We ask the Government of Canada to do so as well.

Considering continuing deaths, we join with other faith communities and with Canadians to urge the government to immediately demonstrate and enact Canada's commitment to international and humanitarian law, human rights, and justice and peace to respond quickly by calling on Israel to de-escalate the situation, honour its treaty and international convention obligations, and cease military action that places civilians at risk. We also encourage you to direct Minister Garneau to meet with faith leaders who are concerned about these matters as well as illegal settlements and the targeting of important infrastructure and civil society services such as roads to hospitals, medical clinics and the offices of journalists.

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

Sincerely,



Rev. Amanda Currie  
Moderator  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

C.c.:

**Conservative Party of Canada**

The Hon. Erin O'Toole, Leader of Her Majesty's Opposition

[Erin.OToole@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Erin.OToole@parl.gc.ca)

**New Democratic Party of Canada**

Jagmeet Singh, [Jagmeet.Singh@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Jagmeet.Singh@parl.gc.ca)

**Green Party of Canada**

Annamie Paul, [Annamie.Paul@greenparty.ca](mailto:Annamie.Paul@greenparty.ca)

**Bloc Quebecois**

Yves-Francois Blanchet, [Yves-Francois.Blanchet@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Yves-Francois.Blanchet@parl.gc.ca)

---

<sup>3</sup> Acts and Proceedings of The Presbyterian Church in Canada 2019, p. 35.