

March 20, 2024

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Dear Prime Minister Trudeau, dear Honourable Ministers Joly and Hussen,

Greetings on behalf of members of the **ACT Alliance Canada Forum** (ACT Canada). We write you today, our hearts heavy with grief at the ongoing assault on Gaza, to urge Canada to take immediate steps to provide leadership in bringing an end to the suffering. We declare, "Enough is Enough!" We welcome an opportunity to meet with you and other officials to work together to put this declaration into concrete actions.

[ACT Alliance](#) is a global faith-based coalition of more than 140 organizational members working together in more than 120 countries on humanitarian aid, gender and climate justice, migration and displacement, and peace and security to support local communities. Our goal is to promote a locally led and coordinated approach to advocacy, humanitarian and developmental issues. The ACT Canada Forum members include [Presbyterian World Service & Development](#), [The Primate's World Relief & Development Fund](#), [World Association for Christian Communication](#), [The United Church of Canada](#) and others.

The atrocities we see daily in Gaza defy our Christian principles of compassion, solidarity, dignity, respect, inclusion, and justice. It is unacceptable that organizations providing humanitarian assistance in Palestine are actively prevented from providing life-saving assistance. The suffering of an entire population, denied access to essentials for survival, is an outrage.

Half a million people in Gaza are on the brink of **starvation**, and the entire population of 2.3 million faces acute food shortages, as reported by aid agencies. Despite compelling evidence, the international community has yet to take decisive action to prevent the worst. It is our collective moral responsibility as Canadians to advocate for compassion, inclusion, and justice.

Women and girls in Gaza are forced to deal with humiliating and distressing gendered impacts of war. The UN and other agencies [report](#) that women and girls who are menstruating face impossible choices, stripping them of dignity and negatively impacting their health. Many are forced to use scraps of tents and plastic during their period, to wash and reuse sanitary pads, or avoid eating or drinking despite extreme hunger so as to avoid the need to use the bathroom, or to stop their period. At any given time, there are 50,000 women who are pregnant and not able to attend prenatal or postnatal

check-ups while the incessant bombings, fleeing for safety and anxiety are leading to premature births.

How is Canada's Feminist International Assistance Policy upholding its commitment to addressing the needs of some of the most vulnerable women and girls in the world at this moment?

Canada must use its influence with Israel and the Palestinian Authority to promote a just and lasting peace. A superficial peace that ignores underlying injustices is fragile and unsustainable, and a true peace requires addressing root causes of the conflict in Palestine, ensuring fairness, application of legal conventions and upholding human rights. Pursuing justice through violent means can perpetuate cycles of revenge and conflict, therefore, justice must be pursued in ways that promote reconciliation, healing, and stability.

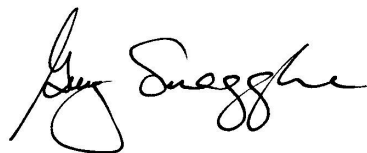
While it is the responsibility of the International Court of Justice (ICJ), which is currently analyzing South Africa's genocide case against Israel to determine if genocide is occurring, as faith-based humanitarian organizations, we have a significant responsibility to actively prevent atrocities. In line with the Genocide Convention, religious leaders bear a significant responsibility in denouncing risk factors of genocide, including those actions perpetuated by governments under the guise of security, religion, or any other issue. We have a duty to speak out.

Therefore, we call on Canada to proactively engage to stop the atrocities and promote peace and dignity for the people affected by the conflict. Canada must:

- Call for an **immediate ceasefire** to allow aid into Gaza, protect civilians, and uphold human rights.
- Take decisive action to **prevent further suffering** in Gaza and advocate for increased humanitarian aid and support for Gaza's population, particularly those on the brink of starvation.
- Urge conflicting parties to allow unhindered **access for humanitarian aid organizations** to deliver life-saving assistance to Gaza.
- Substantially increase Canada's aid envelope to Palestine and occupied territories in order to help meet the critical needs for food, health services, shelter, clean water, and psycho-social support.
- Appeal to all parties in Israel and Palestine to adhere to international humanitarian law, the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, and prioritize the **protection of civilians**.
- Call for an immediate resumption of **dialogue towards a lasting peace** agreement between all parties.
- Press for immediate **release of Israeli hostages and Palestinian political prisoners and detainees**
- Condemn relentless attacks on media freedom and on journalists, and contribute support for the reinstatement of **communication infrastructures and media outlets** in Gaza as a means of addressing the dearth of reliable and trustworthy information.
- Ensure **sustained, safe access to all health facilities** in order to supply them with urgently needed lifesaving healthcare on a regular basis.
- Support publicly the international efforts for **accountability and justice** through legal mechanisms, including the International Court of Justice.

We look forward to your response and request a meeting with you at your convenience to discuss these proposals. We are available to provide further information or clarification as needed.

With prayers for grace and wisdom in the important leadership you provide.
Sincerely,



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