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MODERATOR OF THE 2023 GENERAL ASSEMBLY

The Rev. Mary M. Fontaine, M.Div.

October 25, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada

Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister,

The Presbyterian Church in Canada follows the reports of the violence between Hamas and Israel and the mounting civilian death tolls in Gaza, the occupied West Bank, East Jerusalem and parts of Israel with deepening distress and grief.

The tragic evil that comes with war – the murder of civilians, many of whom are children and the most vulnerable in society – compels us to condemn violence and call for a just peace.

We condemn the violence, especially against Palestinian and Israeli civilians, which are war crimes.

We condemn the war of words that continues to obscure the truth, seeking to hide ongoing atrocities.

Canada has consistently stated its support for human rights charters and international law. However, Canada and the wider international community have failed to uphold international law and human rights equally for all people.

To meet these commitments and our responsibilities, we urge the Government of Canada to call for

- an immediate ceasefire that includes both Israel's bombing of Gaza and Hamas' firing of rockets into Israel,
- the immediate and safe release of all hostages,
- opening a safe corridor (or number of corridors) to provide humanitarian relief to people in Gaza,
- restraint and de-escalation rather than militarized responses that will increase violence and lead to more deaths, and
- an end to the current blockade and the increased violence against Palestinians living in the occupied West Bank and those who are citizens of Israel.

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Clerks of Assembly: The Rev. Victor S.J. Kim and The Rev. Donald G.A. Muir

In addition to condemning the spiralling violence and doing everything in its power for an immediate ceasefire, Canada must work with a renewed effort toward peace with justice. Canada must strive for a solution to ongoing violence that upholds the rights of Palestinians and Israelis.

As the first Indigenous Moderator of the Presbyterian Church in Canada, I personally urge the Government of Canada to consider an Indigenous worldview in speaking wisdom to the conflicts in Israel-Palestine. In Indigenous worldviews, violence begets violence, and conflicts such as this one can infect the whole world, leading to further national and global divisions and leading to the destruction of humanity and the earth. What happens to one happens to all. Indigenous worldviews envision there will be peace among the nations. But the spiritual side of humanity needs to grow beyond the material, towards a balance of the physical, intellectual, emotional and spiritual aspects of human nature, towards sincerity, prayer, gratitude, respectfulness, compassion, non-judgmental attitudes, patience and kindness.

And so we also urge the Government of Canada to

- hold all parties to the same standard of international law regarding the protection of civilians and their human rights,
- respond to the humanitarian crisis unfolding in all affected parts of the occupied Palestinian territories and make resources available to those who can respond, including civil society organizations,
- address underlying systems of oppression that create circumstances that perpetuate violence, including the 75-year Israeli military occupation of Palestine, the Gaza blockade (ongoing since 2007), and the inequality of rights and self-determination of all Palestinians, and
- work constructively toward a future where all Palestinians and Israelis can live in peace and where both Israelis and Palestinians can define what they need for a just peace.

Sincerely,



The Rev. Mary Fontaine  
Moderator of the 2023 General Assembly  
The Presbyterian Church in Canada

Cc     Melanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
        Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Official Opposition  
        Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party  
        Yves-François Blanchet MP, Leader of the Bloc Québécois  
        Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party  
        David DaSilva, Representative of Canada to the Palestinian Authority  
        Lisa Stadelbauer, Ambassador of Canada to Israel