

Canadian Friends of Sabeel

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January 17, 2024

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,

I write to you as chair of Canadian Friends of Sabeel (CFOS). CFOS is a national ecumenical response to the call of Palestinian Christians for solidarity. Through education and engagement, we support the struggle for equality in justice, freedom, and human rights of Palestinians living under apartheid and the illegal Israeli military occupation. With partners around the world, we work non-violently for a just and durable peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

I wish to thank you for expressing on December 12, 2023, Canadian government support for a permanent ceasefire in the Israel-Hamas war. I also encourage you and your government to urgently take further action in support of a permanent ceasefire, an end to the current violence and a way toward a just peace.

First, I would urge you and your government to seriously consider the measures put forward in the accompanying letter by the Rev. Dr. Naim Ateek. Dr. Ateek is a Palestinian Anglican clergy and the founder of Sabeel Palestinian liberation theology center in Jerusalem; he is a widely respected international authority on nonviolent action towards a just and sustainable peace for Palestinians and Israelis. In his recent letter to President Joe Biden (appended below), Dr. Ateek outlines a series of concrete measures that should be taken to end the current war, to implement an interim administration, and to move toward a true and authentic political solution.

Canada's official policy – which you have referenced many times in recent months – is to support the emergence of a Two-State Solution. It is extremely important at this time that Canada, as well as other countries, ensure that these words not remain an empty slogan, but become a true reality. We at CFOS do not take a position on whether a Two-State Solution or a One-State Solution (as some have expressed it) is the best option for peaceful coexistence for Palestinians and Israelis. Nevertheless, we strongly believe that the principles underlying Dr. Ateek's proposal for a Two-State solution are critical to ensuring a resolution beyond the



present war. We would identify these principles as: nonviolent dialogue and diplomacy (to end persistent injustice and repeated cycles of violence), adherence to international human rights and humanitarian laws and the 4th Geneva Convention, an end to Israel's illegal occupation and apartheid rule over Palestinians, an end to Israel's blockade and siege over Gaza, insistence on Israeli reparations and rebuilding of the infrastructure it has destroyed, the right of return for Palestinian refugees, and assurance of Palestinian self-determination in a new political arrangement. We sincerely urge you to press for long-term resolution based on these principles. We believe that, ultimately, these principles will serve the interests of both Palestinians and Israelis.

Secondly, we urge you and your government not to challenge South Africa's case against Israel at the International Court of Justice (ICJ). As you know, South Africa has filed a case accusing Israel of crimes of genocide against Palestinians in Gaza. Its detailed argument, supported by numerous international authorities, claims that Israel's relentless military attacks on the population of Gaza constitute war crimes and even genocide in that "they are intended to bring about the destruction of a substantial part of the Palestinian national, racial and ethnical group." You maintain that Canada supports the rule of law and the international rules-based order, including the mechanisms of the ICJ, even though Canada may not accept the premise of South Africa's case. We urge your government not to intervene to undermine the South Africa case and to commit fully to supporting and implementing any "provisional measures" the ICJ brings forward to support a ceasefire. As one of the countries that actively worked for the dismantling of apartheid in South Africa in the 1980s and 1990s, Canada must not impede South Africa's courageous and principled action to end the genocidal actions of Israel against the people of Gaza.

Thirdly, we urge you to place an embargo on shipments of military weapons and weapons components to Israel. According to Project Ploughshares, which diligently tracks Canadian arms exports around the world, Canada sold directly to Israel \$27,861,256 worth of military goods in 2021 and \$21,329,783 in 2022. Many of these goods have very likely been used in Israel's current war against Hamas and the people of Gaza. Additionally, Canada exports well over \$1 billion worth of military goods annually to the U.S., which is Israel's largest supplier of military aid. Included in Canada's exports are components which the U.S. incorporates into its F-35 fighter jets—jets which are provided to Israel and which are being used for its bombardment of Gaza. Canada claims that its military equipment is not exported to regimes which are in violation of international human rights or humanitarian law. Yet that is clearly what is happening; this must end, if Canada's commitment to peace and security in Palestine-Israel is to have any credibility. Please revoke any permits which allow any Canadian military goods to be transferred to Israel. Please close the loopholes that allow the unregulated and unreported transfer of military goods to Israel via the U.S. Department of Defense.

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Our fourth request relates to Canada's offer to welcome Gazans seeking to flee the deadly and devastating home that Gaza has become. We note with gratitude the government's recent announcement that Canada would offer three-year visas for up to 1,000 Palestinians in Gaza seeking to join family members here in Canada. This is an important measure in providing relief to suffering people right now. **And, as our fourth request, we ask you to extend to these people the same provisions that were provided to Ukrainians fleeing war in 2024 – namely, that no upper limit be placed on the number of Gazans seeking to escape Gaza now.**

Moreover, we insist that Gazans be able to return to their home when a just peace is implemented – and we soundly resist any suggestion that construes Canada's offer of assistance as a way for Israel to permanently "transfer" Gazans out of Gaza.

As Canadian Friends of Sabeel, we believe that a true and just peace – including security for Israelis, and justice, freedom and dignity for Palestinians – can only be achieved through nonviolent means. Hence, we urge you to use your government's influence in the international arena to press for an immediate and permanent ceasefire and the necessary diplomacy and dialogue toward a durable solution. Canada has experience and expertise in terms of truth and reconciliation; integrating many cultures, languages and peoples; carrying out free and fair elections; and the nonviolent resolution of conflict. We believe that Canada has much to contribute to support the building of a just peace in Palestine and Israel and we hope that Canada will step forward to assist in this critical endeavor.

We assure you of our prayers as you lead our country and as you offer a bold and courageous path to peace in Palestine-Israel.

Sincerely yours,



Rula Odeh,
Chair, Canadian Friends of Sabeel

Cc: The Honourable Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Official Opposition
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party



A Prophetic Vision for Justice

to President Joe Biden by the Reverend Dr Canon Naim Stifan Ateek

I stand in utter shock and dismay as I look upon the crushed, broken, and burnt children of Gaza and southern Israel and as I observe the horrifying death toll, comprised primarily of women and children, climb ever higher as a result of a vengeful and relentless bombing campaign undertaken against the tiny parcel of land known as the Gaza Strip. Home to over two million Palestinians, half of them children, most residents of Gaza are refugees or the descendants of refugees, longing to breathe free as all human beings do. The appalling atrocities we are witnessing will never bring an end to this 75-year-plus conflict. Instead, they will lead inevitably to an increase in violence and loss of innocent life.

Mr. President, context matters. Hamas started the present war. But Hamas did not start the occupation and the subjugation of the Palestinian people. Nor was it they who desecrated the sanctity of the Aqsa Mosque in Jerusalem, a major provocation undertaken by extremist Israeli settlers. The failure of the Israeli government to stop these extremists did not start with Hamas. The miserable, debilitating life of those in Gaza since 2007 is the result of Israel's merciless blockade, not Hamas. Although I stand morally and ethically opposed to the violent ideology and actions of Hamas, as an Anglican/Episcopal priest, I am dedicated to the truth. As such, context matters.

What is needed now is not the killing of more innocent people. What we need is compassion and mercy for the other, built upon a foundation of justice as defined in international law.

President Biden, you have declared the outcome of this latest and most violent conflict must result in the implementation of the Two-State Solution. Let that be your mantra! People are seeking leadership that will help transform this largely empty slogan into concrete steps towards the realization of a peaceful solution. Without such practical steps, your words will be nothing more than an exercise in hypocrisy.

In the name of ending the suffering of the thousands of innocent men, women, and children in the Israel-Gaza war, I offer a Vision rooted in the spirit of United Nations Security Council resolution 242, from 1967, based on the formula of land for peace for the two peoples that must live together on the land. The United States, successive Israeli governments, and the Palestinian Authority have each publicly supported this formula for many years, and now it is time to put it into action.

What does this vision entail? How is it to be implemented?

Mr. President, let us imagine together the future and let us take bold steps and concrete actions that will actually transform our words into a just peace for all.



Therefore:

The day after a permanent ceasefire is declared, the US needs to introduce a resolution in the UN Security Council recognizing Palestine as a member state within the 1967 borders. After 56 years, and in light of the current war, the Israeli occupation must be brought to a conclusive end. Then, the UN can assume temporary responsibility for the Gaza Strip.

Led by the United Kingdom, the USA, and Israel, these countries and others must pay for the rebuilding of the Gaza Strip. Ever since the Balfour Declaration was proclaimed by Britain in 1917, these countries have caused immense pain and suffering for our Palestinian people. Justice requires that they be found liable and held accountable.

The Palestinians bear no responsibility for the horrors of the Holocaust. But the Palestinian people must now be prepared to live in peace with their Israeli Jewish neighbors. Both peoples may help one another heal from the wounds of the Holocaust, the pain and suffering of the Nakba, and the horrors of the current catastrophe.

In order to help facilitate the rebuilding of Gaza, I humbly suggest that the UN invite the governments and people of South Africa and Ireland, who carry no colonial baggage in the region and would be acceptable to the Palestinians, to temporarily take charge of peacekeeping and peacemaking responsibilities. They would oversee, manage, and coordinate with the UN and the Palestinians the rebuilding of Gaza, with the goal being a free, globally recognized territory possessing a seaport and airport open to the world. Meanwhile, they would guarantee that no security threat to Israel arises.

After a period of no more than six months from the end of the war, the United Nations must take over administrative responsibilities for the West Bank. Under a temporary UN mandate, the Israel Defense Forces must withdraw entirely from the occupied territories while the Palestinian Authority steps aside.

During this period of UN administered stability, elections must be prepared for Palestinians and Israelis to choose their next leaders. Both must preserve the dignity of one person, one vote under democratic rule and guarantee civil rights and protections for all minority communities. Palestinians and Israelis must demonstrate, through the election of responsible leadership, that they are committed to a peaceful, nonviolent resolution of the conflict. Israelis can be confident that this process will result in long-term security while Palestinians will enjoy the freedom to build their new democratic sovereign state. Support from the international community should be conditioned upon each elected government's acceptance of a peaceful two-state solution. This applies both to Israelis and the Palestinian people.

Negotiations must then proceed unceasingly, with Israeli and Palestinian leadership supported by the United Nations, USA, Britain, the EU, and the Arab League, until all borders of a



sovereign Palestinian state have been established and ensure the sovereignty and security of both peoples in Israel and Palestine.

The following confidence building measures must be undertaken before negotiations conclude, in order to ensure the establishment of a viable Palestinian state:

- 1- Urgently, an elevated highway and rail system needs to be built between Gaza and the West Bank, under the control of the UN, so that the Palestinian people can enjoy unimpeded freedom to travel back and forth freely and directly. All this must be financed by Israel, the US, Britain, and their friends;
- 2 - Israel must start building appropriate infrastructure within the green line to accommodate the return of settlers now living on occupied Palestinian land of the West Bank. (Some provision can be made for those Israeli Jews who want to stay and become Palestinian citizens living under Palestinian rule);
- 3 - The right of return of refugees must be resolved within UN guidelines and in accordance with international law. Palestinian refugees in Lebanon must be given the priority to return to Palestine, replacing the Israeli settlers in the West Bank;
- 4 - Jerusalem must become a city shared by both Palestine and Israel and governed equitably by a special UN commission that includes Palestinians, Israelis, and representatives of the UN and the international community;
- 5 - All holy places must be protected and their integrity secured, especially the Aqsa Mosque for Muslims, the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) for Christians, and the Western Wall for Jews;
- 6 - After a set number of years and a period of economic prosperity, peace education, and healing, Palestine and Israel can decide, if they wish, to join together as a single state, the one-state solution, or as a confederation/federation of states whereby Jerusalem would become the federal capital of the states.

Mr. President, we ask you to lead us as one who embraces those who have visions of justice and peace. Let the engineers, the architects, the lawyers, the social workers, the psychologists, the politicians, the Imams, the Rabbis, and the Christian Clergy start imagining, working, and praying for the fulfillment of this vision. Failure to take such concrete steps transforms the language of “two states” into little more than a hypocritical alibi for the continuation of a status quo long proven unsustainable.

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I believe that the One loving, compassionate, and merciful God of the three Abrahamic faiths would be praised, worshiped, and honored by such a vision of peace that can move us all into the work of reconciliation and forgiveness.

Mr. President, this vision includes my heartfelt belief that you, as a fellow Christian, is capable of empathizing as much with my beleaguered Palestinian people as you have done so publicly for the Jewish people these many decades.

It was our beloved Archbishop Desmond Tutu, the International Patron of Sabeel, who said, "We are prisoners of Hope." And so, it is with much hope and anticipation that you will join me in seeing this vision become a reality, one that requires bold actions and a passion for justice, and only justice!

Christmastide 2023