



## Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)

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*Our principle is, and our practices have always been, to seek peace, and ensue it, and to follow after righteousness and the knowledge of God, seeking the good and welfare, and doing that which tends to the peace of all. All bloody principles and practices we do utterly deny, with all outward wars, and strife, and fightings with outward weapons, for any end, or under any pretence whatsoever, and this is our testimony to the whole world... And as for the kingdoms of this world, we cannot covet them, much less can we fight for them, but we do earnestly desire and wait, that by the word of God's power and its effectual operation in the hearts of men the kingdoms of this world may become the kingdoms of the Lord and of his Christ, that he might rule and reign in men by his spirit and truth, that thereby all people, out of all different judgments and professions might be brought into love and unity with God and one with another, and that they might all come to witness the prophet's words, who said, 'Nation shall not lift up sword against nation, neither shall they learn war any more'. (Is 2:4; Mic 4:3)*

*~ From a Declaration to Charles II by the Quakers, 1660*

August 1, 2014

Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A2

John Baird  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Department of Foreign Affairs, Trade and  
Development  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Rafael Barak  
Ambassador of Israel to Canada  
Embassy of Israel  
50 O'Connor Street  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1P 6L2

Said Hamad  
Chief Representative, Palestinian General  
Delegation in Canada  
18 Driveway  
Ottawa, Ontario, K2P 1C7

Dear Friends,

We write you with grave concern regarding the situation in Israel and Palestine. The current war and violence in Palestine and Israel breaks our hearts. We are appalled that the great majority of those killed and wounded in the conflict have been civilians, many of whom are women and children. We pray for the safety of all people in those nations.

We are moved by the sufferings of the Palestinian and Israeli peoples. This suffering has gone on too long and must not be allowed to continue. We know that both Israelis and Palestinians have committed acts of violence against each other. We are also aware of the huge inequality of power between them.

As a people of faith, we challenge all people, and particularly people of faith, not to put their trust in tanks or bombs or military aggression, but to open themselves to the Spirit of Love which counsels a path of nonviolence. Such a path recognizes the dignity of all peoples and seeks solutions to international conflicts through just and peaceful means.

As Quakers, we reject the use of military force and violence by state or non-state actors. We believe that strategies of nonviolence are the only ethically sound, and ultimately more successful, strategies for overcoming oppression. Our experience with nonviolence has shown that there is a place both for acts of resistance and for the provision of a safe space for individuals of opposing views to dialogue. There have been many dialogue activities, and further opportunities for such work may open up. However, Palestinian nonviolent activists and their Israeli allies agree that the current need is for strong acts of nonviolent resistance and international advocacy.

There are grassroots groups, both Palestinian and Israeli, who use nonviolent action to resist the occupation, even though such actions, of which there are many, are often met by Israel with violence, even lethal violence. These nonviolent actions are not widely reported in the media.

We are heartened by the voices of dissent that have been arising from the Israeli military - young men and women who have been sickened by the ongoing suffering of the Palestinian people and have refused to participate in the military occupation of Gaza and the West Bank. We are also heartened by the networks of Jews, in Canada and elsewhere, who have the courage to dissent against the illegal actions of the Israeli state. We will work with Palestinians and dissenting Jewish groups to mobilize, in a spirit of fairness and nonviolence, for a just peace between the Israeli and Palestinian peoples. Canadian Yearly Meeting, the national church body of Friends in Canada, will continue to have a relationship with the mainstream Canadian Jewish community through our ecumenical affiliation with the Canadian Council of Churches and will continue to dialogue with all as we are able, speaking truth in love.

We call on the State of Israel to end the blockade of Gaza, and to end the occupation of the West Bank and East Jerusalem, in accordance with UN Security Council resolutions 242 and 338. We call on the State of Israel and the Palestinians to end all violence.

We call on the Israeli government and any future state of Palestine to respect each other's right to exist within safe, secure, and defined borders, and to grant equal rights, protections, privileges, and responsibilities to all of their respective citizens.

We urge the Canadian government to follow a balanced policy in the pursuit of secure and sustainable states in Palestine and Israel, and to ensure a better and peaceful life for all their peoples. A balanced policy, or neutrality, does not mean turning our backs on the conflict, but approaching it without bias towards one side or the other.

In Friendship,



Lesley Robertson  
Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee

Cc:

Thomas Mulcair, Official Leader of the Opposition and the New Democratic Party of Canada

Justin Trudeau, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada

Mario Beaulieu, Leader of the Bloc Québécois

Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada

Paul Dewar, Critic for Foreign Affairs (NDP)

Marc Garneau, Critic for Foreign Affairs (Liberal)

Jean-François Fortin, Critic for Foreign Affairs (Bloc)