

November 19, 2020

The Hon. Karina Gould, P.C., M.P.  
Minister for International Development  
House of Commons  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6  
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**RE: Canada must follow through with sustainable funding for UNRWA**

Dear Minister,

Greetings. We pray that you and your colleagues are well and safe in these challenging times.

We represent Christian denominations, church agencies, ecumenical organizations and networks who work with long-standing Palestinian and Israeli partners towards a just and lasting peace.

We write to urge you to make an immediate substantial emergency contribution to support UNRWA programming, and to commit to maintain or increase Canada's previous contributions of \$25 million to UNRWA programmes in 2021.

UNRWA has run out of funding, and is faced with the tragic reality of having to withhold staff salaries as 2020 draws to an end, not least for thousands of health care workers and school teachers. The majority of those impacted are Palestinian children, whose class sizes recently increased to 50 students due to funding cuts, and are now potentially facing the total loss of education, a foundation stone of a healthy society. The funding crisis comes just as 5.7 million Palestinian refugees struggle to survive the coming winter, the impacts of the Covid-19 global pandemic, and the effects of regional and global economic crises.

The Agency needs to raise US\$70 million immediately to pay staff full salaries for November and December 2020. Canada can contribute to ensure that urgently needed health and education programmes can continue to serve the needs of vulnerable people. Lack of basic services threatens the well-being of an already vulnerable population who is also struggling to protect itself against the effects of Covid-19.

It is concerning that, as of August 2020, Canada had only [contributed](#) US\$1,088,907 to support UNRWA programmes, when countries like Italy and Spain, which are reported to have been severely affected by Covid-19, more than doubled Canada's contribution.

We call on the government of Canada to:

- Vote with its European allies this month at the UN in favour of the General Assembly resolution on UNRWA;

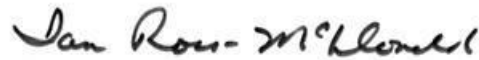
- Make an immediate contribution of its 2018 pledge to UNRWA in the amount of \$50 million;
- work with the European Union and like-minded allies to ensure sustainable funding to UNRWA going forward;
- work for an immediate end to the Israeli occupation as a just and sustainable future for Palestinians and Israelis.

We pray that Canada will continue to uphold its obligations to Palestinian refugees, and increase its contributions toward equitable and sustainable international development.

Sincerely,



The Most Rev. Linda Nicholls  
Primate, Anglican Church of Canada



The Rev. Ian Ross-McDonald  
General Secretary - The Presbyterian  
Church in Canada



Lana Robinson, Clerk, Canadian Friends  
Service Committee (Quakers)



Rev. Michael Blair  
General Secretary, The United Church of  
Canada



The Rev. Susan C. Johnson  
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran  
Church in Canada



Rula Odeh  
Chair, Canadian Friends of Sabeel



Jennifer Henry  
Executive Director, KAIROS: Canadian  
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Chair, Catholics for a Just Peace in  
Palestine and Israel



Rick Cober Bauman  
Executive Director, Mennonite Central  
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George Bartlett  
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C.c.:

The Right Hon. Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister, P.C., M.P.  
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