



Marc Garneau,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

May 21, 2021

Dear Minister Garneau,

Canadian Friends Service Committee, the peace and social justice agency of Quakers in Canada, is dismayed at the current events in Israel/Palestine. For the past several weeks, Israel's police and some violent settlers have been attacking peaceful Palestinian protesters in the old city of Jerusalem. Palestinians were protesting the forced evictions from the East Jerusalem neighbourhood of Sheikh Jarrah, which are illegal under Geneva Convention IV (Part 111, Section 111). Furthermore, Israeli police targeted the sit-down protest at the Damascus Gate and worshipers in the al-Aqsa Mosque and then subsequent protests in the West Bank.

This led to Hamas militants retaliating with rockets being fired into Israel and killing multiple Israelis, including children. The Israeli military then escalated the violence by bombing the Gaza Strip, killing over 200 Palestinians, including at least 65 children, after days of relentless bombardment. While a ceasefire has now been announced, the conditions in Gaza in particular remain beyond dire.

This is a dangerous situation that is not a symmetrical conflict. Israel, with all its military might, is the occupying power. Since 1948, over 750,000 Palestinians have fled or were forcibly expelled from their homes and have never been allowed to return. Palestinians do not have a military and have been under the Israeli occupation since 1967. This occupation gives Israel power over most aspects of Palestinians' lives. According to a recent Human Rights Watch report, Israel's treatment of Palestinians constitutes the crime of apartheid.<sup>1</sup> A pattern of ongoing violence has been happening for years. The repression that Palestinians face in so many ways in their day-to-day lives is violence. The occupation is violence.

Amnesty International says that in the recent bombing and rocket fire both Israel and Hamas have likely committed war crimes.<sup>2</sup> We therefore call on Canada to show leadership and to adhere to international and domestic law by ceasing all arms exports that risk fuelling possible war crimes. Canada cannot on the one hand call for a ceasefire, as it has done, and on the other sell arms to Israel. We call on Canada to end all arms sales to, and cease all other forms of military cooperation with, Israel.

Canadian Quakers remain steadfastly committed to learning alongside our Jewish Israeli and Palestinian partners, and to doing everything we can to support a just and lasting

peace with respect for the dignity and human rights of all in the region. Our policies and recent actions toward this end can be found at: <https://quakerservice.ca/our-work/peace/israel-palestine>.

In Friendship,



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

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<sup>1</sup> Human Rights Watch, “A Threshold Crossed: Israeli Authorities and the Crimes of Apartheid and Persecution,” April 27, 2021, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2021/04/27/threshold-crossed/israeli-authorities-and-crimes-apartheid-and-persecution>

<sup>2</sup> Amnesty International, “Israel/ OPT: Pattern of Israeli attacks on residential homes in Gaza must be investigated as war crimes,” May 17, 2021, <https://www.amnesty.org/en/latest/news/2021/05/israelopt-pattern-of-israeli-attacks-on-residential-homes-in-gaza-must-be-investigated-as-war-crimes>