

Dear Mr. Harper,

We the undersigned, as Canadians of conscience who value justice and peace, call upon the Canadian government to demand an end to Israel's ongoing airstrikes and ground attacks in Gaza, as well as the termination of the Israeli blockade that has gripped Gaza for the past two years. Since the attacks began on December 27th 2008, over 1000 people have been killed in Gaza, half of whom are women and children. In addition, over 4,800 have been injured, many of whom risk death because it has become impossible to give them the proper medical care. The numbers of dead and injured are rising rapidly each day because Israel continues its relentless attacks despite the UN Security Council's resolution demanding a truce and an immediate halt on all attacks.

Canada is a nation once renowned for its commitment to promoting and maintaining international peace and justice. Instead of upholding these noble values at this time of crisis by demanding an immediate ceasefire, our government officials have instead only made statements in support of Israel's claims that the current tragedy is all because Hamas broke the truce and that Israel is simply exercising its right to defend itself. However, both of these claims are being strongly challenged by experts and in the streets around the world. According to Richard Falk, UN Special Rapporteur for Human Rights in the Palestinian Territories, the truce between Israel and Hamas was not violated first by Hamas. Rather Israel broke conditions of the truce on November 4th in an armed attack that killed six Palestinians. Prior to this, Hamas had not launched any rockets into Israel since June, when the ceasefire was finalized. Furthermore, several international law experts have publicly expressed their opinion that Israel's claim to be acting in self-defence meets neither of the customary requirements of necessity and proportionality required for self-defence.

Around the world, citizens and nations are calling for an immediate end to Israel's attacks. UN Secretary General Ban Ki-moon has called for an immediate ceasefire, stating, "*The citizen population of Gaza is being subjected to a massive trauma that is not of their own making. We must insist that Israel end its military assault, which is clearly excessive.*" EU foreign policy chief Javier Solana has said that Israel's attacks on Gaza are "*inflicting an unacceptable toll on Palestinian civilians and will only worsen the humanitarian crisis as well as complicate the search for a peaceful solution*". Moreover, the International Committee of the Red Cross (ICRC) and Human Rights Watch, among other respected organisations, have even called for an investigation into Israeli war crimes. And Navi Pillay, the UN high commissioner for human rights, has called for "credible, independent and transparent" investigations into possible violations of humanitarian law by Israel.

In contrast, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs Mr. Lawrence Cannon seems only preoccupied with "*the continued rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups which have deliberately targeted civilians*" without consideration for the appalling number of innocent men, women and children killed and maimed by Israel's aerial and ground assaults. On Monday, January 12th, the 47-member United Nations Human Rights Council passed a resolution condemning Israel's military operation in Gaza and also calling for an end to the launching of rockets by Palestinian militants against Israeli civilians. Thirty-three States voted in favour, 13 abstained, and only one voted against: Canada! Such one-sided

positions can only lead to Canada being seen as complicit in Israel's attacks against innocent civilians in Gaza.

Over the past two years, Gaza has been under a strict Israeli blockade resulting in an extreme shortage of food, water, medical supplies, fuel oil and other basic necessities, and thereby threatening the 1.5 million inhabitants of Gaza with severe malnourishment, poverty and death. This blockade is in clear violation of international humanitarian law. The recent attacks only exacerbate the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, worsening with each passing hour. Furthermore, these attacks will only serve to fuel increased hatred and further jeopardize the future of peace in the Middle East. Therefore, in addition to a ceasefire of ground, naval and air attacks, we call upon the Canadian government to demand an immediate end to the blockade and to seek the full restoration of humanitarian aid and supplies to Gaza.

Mr. Harper, Canadians coast-to-coast are demonstrating in the streets, demanding an end to the attacks on Gaza. The killing or harming of civilians should never be accepted or justified and all efforts should be made to protect them. We are all united as one voice in calling upon the Canadian government –our government- to uphold international law and speak out in the name of justice, peace and the sanctity of human life. We urge you to hear our voice and act now before it is too late.

Respectfully Yours,