

October 20th, 2023



Canadian Ecumenical
Justice Initiatives /
Initiatives œcuméniques
canadiennes pour
la justice

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Canadian Catholic Organization for
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Canadian Religious Conference
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Le fonds du Primat pour le secours
et le développement mondial

80 Hayden Street, Suite 400
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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau,
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

KAIROS Canada and its member churches and agencies are following reports of the escalating violence between Hamas and Israel and the mounting civilian death tolls in Gaza, the occupied West Bank and East Jerusalem and Israel with deepening alarm and profound grief. The level of human loss and suffering is unconscionable and must stop.

We write at this time with an urgent appeal to you to do everything in your power to support an immediate ceasefire and a negotiated solution to the spiralling conflict.

KAIROS works with partner organizations in the region, both Palestinian and Israeli, and we hear their cries for a lasting and just peace. For years KAIROS Canada has been supporting local women peacebuilders throughout the region to provide psychosocial support and human rights training to women and to build conditions for sustainable, just and equitable peace on the ground. These voices are being silenced, and this work is extinguished by the current violence.

In response to this situation, KAIROS Canada and member churches have issued an ecumenical statement, **A Cry to End the Violence and to uphold the rights of all civilians to life and freedom from violence and discrimination (attached)**.

In this statement, we condemn the violence, particularly against Israeli and Palestinian civilians, which constitutes a war crime. We lament the loss of Palestinian voices for peace in international media that fails to distinguish between Hamas and Palestinian civilians. We affirm and amplify the call for respect for international humanitarian law and human rights by both sides.

Canada and the wider international community have failed to uphold international law; the international response must comply with international humanitarian law.

We join the voices of member churches and partners in the region and in Canada in urging the Canadian Government to support an immediate ceasefire and a negotiated resolution to this violence.

We acknowledge and thank Canada for calling for the establishment and opening of a humanitarian corridor to Gaza, on October 16.



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While this is a critical step, we also urge you to pursue all diplomatic channels to ensure the protection of civilians and the restoration of humanitarian aid to Gaza and to guarantee that this humanitarian corridor is open and secure.

In addition, we echo the calls from our ecumenical statement and urge Canada to take leadership in calling for:

- an end to the current blockade of Gaza;
- the immediate and safe release of all hostages; and,
- the rights to life and freedom of both Palestinians and Israelis.

The atrocious attack on Al Ahli Arab hospital on October 17 puts this violence, human suffering and loss into sharp relief and reinforces the urgent call for a ceasefire. We echo the calls of the leaders the Anglican Church of Canada and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada in their letter of October 18, 2022 in which they write:

“We urge everyone to speak up for an immediate cessation of hostilities and the opening of a humanitarian corridor to allow potable water, food, medical care and more to reach those in need. Canada must use all means at its disposal to advocate for the respect of international law and the protection of human rights as it has done in the past. The time to speak is now!”

The pain and tragedy of the growing numbers of civilian lives, Israeli and Palestinian, lost in the violence to date are evidence of the need for an immediate ceasefire, not an escalation of violence. Now is the time for Canada to work with renewed effort toward peace with justice that upholds the rights of both Palestinians and Israelis to life and freedom from violence and discrimination; and an end to the occupation.

We hold up the voices of our Palestinian and Israeli partners who are calling for an end to the violence. We urge you to show leadership in making all efforts possible for a just and lasting peace.

Sincerely,

Rev. Murray Pruden
Steering Committee Chair
KAIROS Ecumenical Justice Initiatives

Leah Reesor-Keller
Interim Executive Director
KAIROS: Canadian Ecumenical Justice Initiatives



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

David DaSilva Representative of Canada to the Palestinian Authority.

