



Canadian Arab Federation
La Fédération Canado-Arabe

ACTION ALERT

January 05, 2009
For Immediate Release

Canadian Arab Federation calls on all people of conscience to contact the Canadian government immediately to demand firm action against Israel's ongoing assault on Gaza

TORONTO- The Canadian Arab Federation calls on all Canadians to contact their Member of Parliament, as well as the Canadian Prime Minister and Foreign Affairs Minister and demand for immediate intervention, calling for an end to the attack on Gaza and an end to the blockade on Gaza.

"Canada needs to take a stand and demand an end to the Israeli attack on Gaza along with a lift of the siege and end to the illegal occupation of Palestinian land" stated Khaled Mouammar, CAF President.

Facts to consider:

- Israeli troops began a ground incursion into Gaza on Saturday Jan. 3rd/09, after 8 continuous days of airstrikes.
- Over 520 Palestinians have been killed so far and over 2,700 wounded. The death toll continues to rise rapidly as Israel relentlessly continues its attack each day.
- This is the single largest assault on the Gaza Strip since 1967, when Israel's illegal occupation of the land began.
- Gaza has been under a strict Israeli blockade over the past two years, resulting in an extreme shortage of food, water, medicine and fuel for its inhabitants, threatening the people of Gaza with severe malnourishment, poverty and death. The recent onslaught only further exacerbates the misery and devastation.
- On December 27th 2008, Mr. Lawrence Cannon, the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs released a statement stating *"Israel has a clear right to defend itself against the continued rocket attacks by Palestinian militant groups which have deliberately targeted civilians."*
- On December 29th, Michael Ignatieff, leader of the Official Opposition stated *"The Liberal Party of Canada unequivocally condemns the rocket attacks launched by Hamas against Israeli civilians and calls for an immediate end to these attacks. We affirm Israel's right to defend itself against such attacks, and also its right to exist in peace and security."*

How to contact the Canadian government:

1. Office of the Prime Minister, Mr. Stephen Harper

Phone (613) 992-4211 | E-mail pm@pm.gc.ca and harper.s@parl.gc.ca | Fax: (613) 941-6900

2. Ministry of Foreign Affairs, Mr. Lawrence Cannon

Phone: (613) 944-4000 | E-mail l.cannon@international.gc.ca | Fax: (613) 944-4500

3. Your Member of Parliament

Find the contact information for your MP by entering your postal code here:
<http://www2.parl.gc.ca/Parlinfo/Compilations/HouseOfCommons/MemberByPostalCode.aspx?Menu=HOC>

Please keep your message polite, yet firm. See below for a sample letter.

CONTACT:

Canadian Arab Federation (CAF)

T: (416) 493-8635

F: (416) 493-9239

E: info@caf.ca

W: www.caf.ca

SAMPLE LETTER

To Whom It May Concern:

It is imperative that the Canadian government condemn Israel's ongoing massacre of the people in Gaza. Over 460 people have been killed and the death toll increases daily. Canada is a nation once renowned for its commitment to freedom, peace and justice; however, the current stance taken by our government officials is a betrayal of the values upon which this country firmly stood for.

The statements of our government officials regarding Israel's "right to defend itself" has made Canada complacent in Israel's war crimes in Gaza. This injustice being committed at the hands of Israel in no way reflects a calibrated response to rockets fired by Hamas, which could have been avoided if the truce was extended and its terms were respected. Rather, Israel's response to rockets has been massive air attacks targeting innocent men, women and children, while leveling homes, government buildings, mosques and educational facilities.

Furthermore, it is necessary that the Canadian government demand an end to Israel's blockade of Gaza, which has caused an extreme shortage of food, water, medicine and fuel for its inhabitants, threatening the people of Gaza with severe malnourishment, poverty and death. This two-year blockade is a clear violation of international law.

The Canadian government must act swiftly, before any more innocent lives are lost.

Thank You.

Sincerely,
(Your name)

Quotes you may use as a Talking Points:

"... Hamas has repeatedly proposed long-term truces with Israel and offered to negotiate a permanent truce. During the last cease-fire, established through Egyptian intermediaries in July, Hamas upheld the truce although Israel refused to ease the blockade. It was Israel that, on Nov. 4, initiated an armed attack that violated the truce and killed six Palestinians. It was only then that Hamas resumed firing rockets at Israel." -- Richard Falk, the U.N. special Rapporteur for human rights in the occupied Palestinian territory and former Princeton University law professor.

Israel bears special responsibility as the occupying power exerting effective control over the Gaza Strip. -- Physicians for Human Rights-Israel

"Privilege and power, especially military power, is a dangerous narcotic. Violence destroys those who bear the brunt of its force, but also those who try to use it to become gods. Over 350 Palestinians have been killed, many of them civilians, and over 1,000 have been wounded since the air attacks began on Saturday. Ehud Barak, Israel's defence minister, said Israel is engaged in a "war to the bitter end" against Hamas in Gaza. A war? Israel uses sophisticated attack jets and naval vessels to bomb densely crowded refugee camps and slums, to attack a population that has no air force, no air defence, no navy, no heavy weapons, no artillery units, no mechanized armour, no command and control, no army, and calls it a war. It is not a war. It is murder." -- Chris Hedges, who covered the Mideast for The New York Times for seven years.

"The use of terror and hunger to break a hostile population is one of the oldest forms of warfare. I watched the Bosnian Serbs employ the same tactic in Sarajevo. Those who orchestrate such sieges do not grasp the terrible rage born of long humiliation, indiscriminate violence and abuse. A father or a mother whose child dies because of a lack of vaccines or proper medical care does not forget. A boy whose ill grandmother dies while detained at an Israel checkpoint does not forget. A family that loses a child in an airstrike does not forget. All who endure humiliation, abuse and the murder of family members do not forget. This rage becomes a virus within those who, eventually, stumble out into the daylight. Is it any wonder that 71 percent of children interviewed at a school in Gaza recently said they wanted to be a "martyr"? The Israelis in Gaza, like the American forces in Iraq and Afghanistan, are foolishly breeding the next generation of militants and Islamic radicals. Jihadists, enraged by the injustices done by Israel and the United States, seek to carry out reciprocal acts of savagery, even at the cost of their own lives. The violence unleashed on Palestinian children will, one day, be the violence unleashed on Israeli children. This is the tragedy of Gaza. This is the tragedy of Israel." -- Chris Hedges

"It is macabre," Falk said of the blockade. "I don't know of anything that exactly fits this situation. People have been referring to the Warsaw ghetto as the nearest analog in modern times." "There is no structure of an occupation that endured for decades and involved this kind of oppressive circumstances," "The magnitude, the deliberateness, the violations of international humanitarian law, the impact on the health, lives and survival and the overall conditions warrant the characterization of a crime against humanity. This occupation is the direct intention by the Israeli military and civilian authorities. They are responsible and should be held accountable." -- Richard Falk

"...what Israel is doing to the 1.5 million Palestinians in Gaza "a crime against humanity." Falk, who is Jewish, has condemned the collective punishment of the

Palestinians in Gaza as "a flagrant and massive violation of international humanitarian law as laid down in Article 33 of the Fourth Geneva Convention." He has asked for "the International Criminal Court to investigate the situation, and determine whether the Israeli civilian leaders and military commanders responsible for the Gaza siege should be indicted and prosecuted for violations of international criminal law." -- Richard Falk

Facts about the war on Gaza:

- The recent cease-fire between Israel and Hamas began in June 2008. The terms were as follows:
 1. Israel would drastically reduce its military blockade of Gaza.
 2. Israel would halt all military incursions into Gaza.
 3. Hamas would halt all rocket attacks into Israel.

- From the outset of the cease-fire, Israel did little to ease its military blockade. As a result, Gazans continued to suffer from a lack of food, fuel, financial aid, electricity, clean water, medical supplies, and more. This has been, inarguably, an attack on innocent Palestinian civilians.

- Despite the intense blockade against Gazan civilians, the cease-fire held until November 4, 2008. On that date, the Israeli military made an incursion into Gaza and killed six Palestinians. The Israeli government sought to justify these actions, saying that they suspected these Palestinians of plotting to kidnap Israeli soldiers. Palestinian fighters responded to the attack by launching rockets into Israel. Thus began the unravelling of the cease-fire.

- As the cease-fire began to crumble, the violence from both sides intensified. Efforts to redeem the cease-fire ultimately failed.

- Following the end of the cease-fire, Israel moved closer to an invasion of the territory. The Israeli government claimed that this was the only remaining option to eliminate rocket attacks from Gaza. However, as cited in the sources above, this was clearly not the case. Israel had failed to abide by the terms of the cease-fire. For the overwhelming majority of the six-month truce, Israel had refused to ease its military blockade of Gaza to any significant degree. In addition, it was the initial violator of the cease-fire when it sent tanks and aircraft into Gaza and killed six Palestinians on November 4, 2008. In fact, there is evidence that Israel was planning to strike Gaza even while the cease-fire was still in effect.

- In the interest of peace, Hamas, and especially Fatah, have firmly established that they are willing to participate in negotiations that are based on internationally recognized borders and rights.

- The White House said that Israel will cease its attack when Hamas has agreed to a truce. Hamas said they are open to any cease-fire

propositions. A cease-fire has been proposed, but Israel rejected this offer.

The international community must continue to demand that a cease-fire be implemented. In order to be successful, any agreement must call for:

1. An end to Israel's blockade of Gaza
2. An end to the Israeli invasion of Gaza
3. An end to rocket attacks into Israel
4. An end to the plight of the Palestinian people, and the beginning of serious efforts to reach a final solution for the Palestinian problem.

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Established in 1967, the Canadian Arab Federation is a national, non-partisan, non profit and membership-based organization. CAF represents Canadian Arabs on issues relating to public policy.