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Monday, February 14, 2024

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I trust this letter finds you well. On behalf of Mennonite Church Canada, I am writing to urge the Government of Canada to support a peaceful resolution to the conflict taking place in Israel, Gaza, and the West Bank. We are grateful to belong to a country with a long history of extending openness and generosity to vulnerable populations, including the Mennonite community. As a faith community, we represent 25,000 baptized members dispersed in over 200 congregations across the country, and we appreciate the welcoming spirit that Canada continues to embody.

Our history in Canada spans 150 years, with the Mennonites arriving to escape oppression. Many of our members, both historically and presently, have come as refugees seeking a new home and a peaceful life. While we acknowledge and appreciate the refuge we have found, we also recognize that we now live as settlers on both Treaty and unceded land. Over the years, we have actively engaged in efforts to reconcile this reality, even as Mennonites (mostly refugees) continue to arrive from various parts of the world.

It is also essential for us to acknowledge the complexity of our own history, particularly concerning some Mennonites during World War II in Germany who were found to have connections to Nazism. Our scholars have been diligently researching and bringing to light this historical fact. It is a reminder of the imperfections within our community, and we remain committed to addressing these issues honestly and transparently.

Recognizing the complexity of history, we understand that there must be immense challenges associated with the Israel/Hamas conflict. We can only imagine the challenges global leaders are facing in trying to deal with this situation. The Government of Canada represents the people of Canada. As a faith community, one of the tenets of our faith is to seek peace and pursue it (Psalm 34:14), in all circumstances. We are guided by principles to love our enemies (Matthew 5:43-48) and to seek to live peaceably with all (Romans 12:18). These teachings shape our perspective as we engage with the complexities of global conflicts. We offer these to you as people of the church and as citizens of Canada.

"For no one can lay any foundation other than the one that has been laid; that foundation is Jesus Christ." 1 Cor. 3:11



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We appreciate the diplomatic efforts of the Canadian government in navigating this challenging situation. We encourage continued dialogue and diplomacy that seeks a just and lasting peace for all parties involved. We think it is appropriate to call Israel to account for ignoring the pleas of the United Nations World Court in preventing genocidal acts and for not supplying adequate humanitarian aid. It would also be appropriate to insist that safe zones are provided for the civilian population. Further, we call on the Government of Canada to halt arms sales to Israel as these sales will only prolong the conflict and compound the suffering of so many innocent civilians, many of whom are women and children. We implore you to do whatever you can to bring about a ceasefire.

Thank you for your attention to this matter. We would welcome conversation and even collaboration where we, from the Mennonite Church community, could work with the Government of Canada to help bring resolve. We have had a presence on the Mount of Olives for almost 75 years. We pray, we hope, we dream of a time when both the citizens of Israel and Palestine can live in societies founded on the principles of mutual respect, justice, compassion, and peace.

In hope for peace,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be "Geraldine Balzer", written in a cursive style.

Geraldine Balzer
Moderator
Mennonite Church Canada