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Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society

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April 29, 2024

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

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing to you at the direction of the Staff Representative Assembly of the Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society to urgently address the ongoing crisis in Gaza and express our deep concern regarding the humanitarian situation. As educators and members of a social justice and anti-oppression union, we stand united against antisemitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Palestinian hate, and denounce all war, colonialism and imperialism.

With urgency and alarm, we call upon the Canadian Federal government to take immediate action in addressing the following critical issues underway in Gaza and the Occupied Palestinian Territories.

We urge the Canadian government to exert diplomatic pressure on all parties involved to immediately cease hostilities in Gaza. A ceasefire is imperative to allow humanitarian aid to reach those in need and to ensure the safe release of all hostages held in the region.

Catastrophic hunger, malnutrition, and starvation are resulting from the current conditions – the highest number ever recorded by the IPC system, and double the number in IPC Phase 5 just three months ago. This has impacted more than 1.1 million people in Gaza – half of the population¹

This is due, in part, to the drastic reduction in access to Gaza, reduced by over 60% from prior to October 7, 2023. The restrictions on aid entering Gaza has also had an impact on the ability of those injured by military intervention to receive medical care, including antibiotics, medicine, and other lifesaving interventions².

¹ Bryant, E. (2024, March 18). *Hunger in Gaza: Famine findings a 'dark mark' on the world, says WFP Palestine country director*. World Food Programme. www.wfp.org

Press Release (2024, March 15). *Acute malnutrition has doubled in one month in the north of Gaza strip: UNICEF*. Unicef. <https://www.unicef.org/press-releases/acute-malnutrition-has-doubled-one-month-north-gaza-strip-unicef>

Joint News Release (2024, February 19). *Children's lives threatened by rising malnutrition in the Gaza Strip*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news/item/19-02-2024-children-s-lives-threatened-by-rising-malnutrition-in-the-gaza-strip>

² (2024, April 22) *Gaza: Rate of attacks on healthcare higher than in any other conflict globally since 2018*. Save the Children. <https://www.savethechildren.net/news/gaza-rate-attacks-healthcare-higher-any-other-conflict-globally-2018>

In the conflict between the Israeli government and Hamas, the indiscriminate bombing and starvation of Palestinian civilians, particularly children and educational facilities, is utterly deplorable and must be unequivocally condemned under any circumstances. We urge Canada to join the international community in condemning such acts and to push for accountability for those responsible for these atrocities. As educators, we condemn the wholesale destruction of the Gazan education system with 80% of schools damaged and destroyed, along with 100% of all universities damaged or destroyed. As a result 625,000 students no longer have access to education³.

We call for the Israeli government's compliance with the ruling of the International Court of Justice (ICJ) regarding its obligations under international law. We urge Canada to use its diplomatic channels to ensure that the Israeli government respects the ICJ ruling and upholds its legal obligations towards the Palestinian people. Genocide is not acceptable, and we demand the Canadian government to be increasingly active in our opposition to ongoing killing, destruction, prevention of aid and humanitarian assistance in Gaza.

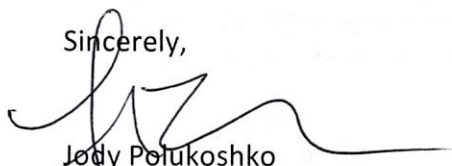
It is imperative for Canada to end any complicity in the ongoing conflict in Gaza and to instead prioritize diplomatic negotiations aimed at achieving a just and lasting peace in the region. Canada must play a proactive role in facilitating dialogue between the involved parties to find a comprehensive and sustainable solution to the conflict.

Though the March 18th vote on 658, brought by NDP MP Heather McPherson, was a step towards peace, Canada must continue to exert diplomatic pressure to help bring both parties to the negotiation table with the aims of ending the conflict and building a sustainable peace.

In conclusion, the Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society urges the Canadian government to immediately demonstrate strong leadership and moral integrity by taking immediate and decisive action to address the crisis in Gaza. The international community is looking to Canada to uphold its commitment to human rights and to advocate for peace and justice in the region.

Thank you for your attention to this urgent matter. We look forward to seeing Canada take concrete steps towards promoting peace and stability in Gaza and the wider Middle East.

Sincerely,



Jody Polukoshko

President,

Vancouver Elementary and Adult Educators' Society

Statement. (2024, April 6). *Six months of war leave Al-Shifa hospital in ruins, WHO mission reports*. World Health Organization. <https://www.who.int/news/item/06-04-2024-six-months-of-war-leave-al-shifa-hospital-in-ruins--who-mission-reports>

³ (2024, April 18). *Gaza: UN experts decry 'systemic obliteration' of education system*. United Nations. <https://news.un.org/en/story/2024/04/1148716>

Press Release (2024, April 18). *UN experts deeply concerned over 'scholasticide' in Gaza*. United Nations Human Rights Officer of the High Commissioner. <https://www.ohchr.org/en/press-releases/2024/04/un-experts-deeply-concerned-over-scholasticide-gaza>