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The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

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RE: Canada should suspend diplomatic relations with Israel, given Israel's flagrant disregard for international law

To the Right Honourable Prime Minister Trudeau,
Greetings from The United Church of Canada.

We are writing to you today to call on Canada to take a stand for humanity and for respect for international law, and to suspend relations with the State of Israel until it has complied with the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice (ICJ). Below we explain why we are calling on Canada to take such a bold and daring stand for justice.

It has been almost a month since the ICJ issued its advisory opinion on *Legal Consequences arising from the Policies and Practices of Israel in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem*. In sharp contrast to the advisory opinion's calls for Israel to end its occupation, the military incursions and massacres have, instead, intensified.

The United Church of Canada has written to the Government of Canada on many occasions to ask for more to be done to ensure a just peace in Palestine and Israel. This is the first time that we are asking for Canada to issue this kind of sanction on the State of Israel, because, clearly, quiet diplomacy is not working.

Israel is ignoring the ICJ's July 19, 2024, advisory opinion that ruled, among other important conclusions, that Israel must immediately end its occupation of the occupied Palestinian territories. Worse still, Israel is directly targeting civilians who are sheltering in schools. Below is an extract from an [August 10, 2024, press release](#) from the UN Human Rights Office in the occupied Palestinian territory describing the situation:

"This is at least the 21st strike on a school, each serving as a shelter, that the UN Human Rights Office has recorded since 4 July (2024). These strikes have resulted in at least 274 fatalities, including women and children.

Despite IDF statements that all measures are taken to avoid civilian harm, the repeated strikes on IDP shelters in areas to which the populations have been forced to move, and the consistent and predictable impact on civilians, suggest a failure to strictly comply with obligations required by International Humanitarian Law (IHL), including the principles of distinction, proportionality, and precautions in attack.

Furthermore, these systematic attacks on schools came in the context where more than 90 per cent of Gaza's population has been displaced while the Israeli military continues detonating residential buildings and restricting the entry and distribution of humanitarian assistance. IDPs face indescribable horror after 10 months of hostilities, including multiple forced displacements, the rapid spread of diseases, and ongoing denial of access to the basic necessities of life. For many, schools are the last resort to find some shelter and possible access to food and water.

In most of the incidents, the Israeli military asserts that the schools were used by Palestinian armed groups and that they took measures to reduce civilian harm. While the co-location by armed groups of military objectives with civilians or the use of the presence of civilians with the objective of shielding a military objective from attack constitute violations of IHL, it does not negate Israel's obligation to comply strictly with IHL, including the principles of proportionality, distinction and precaution when carrying out military operations. Israel, as the occupying power, is obliged to provide the population it has forcibly displaced with basic humanitarian needs, including safe shelter."

It is very clear that the international community must take a stronger stand so the Palestinian people can exercise their right to self-determination, and possibly even their right to exist. The advisory opinion of the ICJ calls not only for action by the State of Israel, but also cautions that all states may need to take action to avoid complicity.

While we appreciate that the Government of Canada has made some statements to call for a ceasefire, and made a joint statement following the ICJ ruling, much more is clearly required for Canadian policy and actions to be consistent with the ICJ advisory opinion. Furthermore, much more must be done if Israel is to be encouraged to cease the occupation, end the military offensives against civilians and respect international law.

As a result, in addition to other required measures to advance a just peace in Palestine and Israel, we urge the Government of Canada to suspend diplomatic relations with Israel with immediate effect and impose lawful targeted economic and political sanctions against Israel, as it did during Apartheid in South Africa.

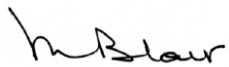
Specifically, we call on Canada to:

- Condemn the targeting of schools by IDF and all acts of violence against civilians.
- Call for an immediate ceasefire and an end to the blockade on Gaza.

- Support international efforts to investigate those responsible and hold them accountable.
- Increase humanitarian aid to Gaza and support reconstruction efforts.
- Work towards a just and lasting peace in Palestine and Israel.
- Recall Canada's Ambassador to Israel.
- Revoke the credentials of the Israeli Ambassador to Canada.
- Implement a comprehensive, two-way arms embargo on Israel:
 - o Such an embargo must stop all trade, including nullify previously approved export permits and preventing trade of component parts through third party states such as the United States.
- Suspend the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement, at minimum until such time as trade supporting the occupation of the OPT is excluded.

We would request that you treat this life-and-death matter with urgency. We would welcome an opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss how the church can work with the government in support of a just and lasting peace in Palestine and Israel.

Sincerely,



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C.c.:

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