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

Dear Right Honourable Justin Trudeau,

On behalf of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), I urgently request that you join the international community in calling for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

The scale of the bloodshed and destruction that Israel has unleashed on Gaza over the last month is unprecedented. There can be no avoiding the fact that civilians are the primary target of Israel’s military campaign. More than 10,000 Palestinians have now been killed in the deliberate targeting of civilian infrastructure, from residential blocs to hospitals and ambulances to United Nations-run schools. Israel’s ‘total siege’ on Gaza has starved the civilian population of food, water, and medicine, and the ban on fuel has brought the hospital system to the point of total collapse. At the same time, Israel’s ‘evacuation orders’ have prompted the forced displacement of over 1.4 million people, and internal Israeli documents suggest that its goal is to transfer the population to Egypt. When combined with dehumanizing language from Israeli officials, we agree with the urgent warnings from UN human rights experts that “the Palestinian people are at grave risk of genocide.” The time for action is now.

Unfortunately, Canada has so far opposed calls for a ceasefire and appears to support Israel’s indefinite military escalation with the goal of “eliminating” Hamas. This is a failing approach which is directly causing unfathomable bloodshed and suffering. Canada needs to shift course immediately. Some of the reasons that this approach is a failure are as follows:

1- **Israel’s war on Gaza does not amount to self-defence against an immediate threat.**
   Israel’s bombing campaign is not targeting Hamas specifically, but amounts to collective punishment against the civilian population, both through indiscriminate bombardment and total siege. This is a gross violation of its obligations under international law. We need to be clear about this: Bombing apartment buildings and schools is not self-defence. Killing children is not self-defence. Starving people of the essentials necessary for life, including food, water, and medicine, is not self-defence.

2- **Humanitarian pauses in the context of Israel’s war on Gaza cannot address the critical humanitarian needs.** This would amount to a ‘pause’ in fighting, followed by the resumption of mass killing and deliberate starvation. The scale of the current humanitarian catastrophe cannot be reversed with temporary and localized influxes of
aid. Instead, averting catastrophic human loss requires the immediate, massive, unconditional transfers of aid throughout the entire territory and the resumption of basic services necessary for maintaining the conditions of life.

3- Supporting Israel’s war on Gaza has not reduced the risks to safety and security in the region, but appears to be escalating the conflict to a regional war. As you know, Israel’s actions have prompted attacks on US bases, firefight on the border with Lebanon, and drone attacks from Yemen. This is still a powder keg that could blow wide open. This path we are on leads to war with Iran. We must pull Israel and the US back from the brink. A good ally gets their friend out of a fight, rather than eggs them on.

4- Israel’s war on Gaza is undermining efforts to secure the safe release of hostages. Further military escalation is the last thing that would secure the release of hostages who are being held by Hamas in violation of international law. Further escalation of Israel’s ground operations is putting the lives of hostages in direct jeopardy, making the conditions less safe for them to be released, and has undermined Qatar-led negotiations towards a prisoner/hostage swap. If the release of hostages is a priority for the Canadian government, a ceasefire is the best way to ensure their freedom.

5- Israel’s war on Gaza does not have realistic goals. There is no military solution to Israel’s problems in Gaza. Israel has repeatedly bombed Gaza over the last two decades and has always ended up back in the same place. Even if the destruction of Hamas was possible, Canada must be honest about how many Palestinian children it will allow Israel to kill to achieve this goal. Moreover, what happens the day after? We have learned in Afghanistan, Iraq, and Syria that Western-led operations to topple regimes and replace them with compliant clients will lead to worse actors arising from the power vacuum (ISIL), or their return when we finally give up (Taliban). Without addressing the underlying problems of occupation, dispossession, and the denial of freedom for millions of Palestinians, there is no hope for a just resolution. The mass killing, starvation, displacement, and oppression of millions of Palestinians will never lead to peace.

Canada must discourage Israel, and the US, from going down this destructive path. Instead, as immediate steps, Canada should:

- Demand the immediate and unconditional cessation of all hostilities.
- Call for an end to Israel’s siege of Gaza and for the restoration of humanitarian aid and access to the basic necessities of life. There must be a rapid, sufficient, and unconditional influx of aid and other supplies to avert mass deaths.
- Call on Israel to rescind the evacuation order of the north, and work to avert the mass forced displacement of the population from Gaza.
- Suspend Canada’s two-way military trade with Israel. This is particularly necessary given the severe risk that Canadian exports may be used by Israel to target civilians in Gaza, therefore implicating Canadian policy in war crimes.
• Support international investigations into possible war crimes, to hold all violators accountable. This includes supporting the jurisdiction of the International Criminal Court, which has confirmed that it has jurisdiction to investigate the ongoing actions by both Israel and Hamas.

• Demand an end to Israel’s illegal blockade and 56-year occupation of Palestinian territory, and work to guarantee the right to return for Palestinian refugees.

You don’t make peace with your friends, but with your enemies. The only way forward is through a negotiated ceasefire and a resolution of the underlying issues of dispossession, occupation, and apartheid. To this end, Hamas must be seen as a political actor, not a force of evil outside of history. Both Israel and Hamas have held to ceasefires in the past, and both parties have also been responsible for violating them. All parties must be held responsible to the same standard of international law, and both Hamas and Israel must be held accountable for the war crimes committed before and after October 7. This accountability cannot be reached through war, but through international forums of justice that can investigate and prosecute these crimes.

We look forward to continuing this conversation with you. Should you wish, feel free to contact me at 438-380-5410.

Sincerely,

Thomas Woodley, MPA
President, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East