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October 27, 2023.

## **UPDATED Statement on the Israel-Hamas War**

Davenport friends and neighbours:

I am writing to provide an update on the Israel-Hamas War and our federal government's latest response and actions as of October 27. This issue is both an emotional one and a divisive one.

I would like to remind you about what Canada's focus is now:

- Immediate release of the hostages by Hamas – this is the fastest way to deescalate the situation.
- Calling for a humanitarian pause in the hostilities – to stop the war long enough to deliver food, water, medicine, fuel and the necessities of life to civilians who have no choice but to remain in Gaza. (Why not a ceasefire? See below.)
- Getting humanitarian aid into Gaza. Canada is providing \$60 million in aid– one of the highest levels of assistance on a per capita basis in the world. We provide our funding based on need in Gaza and northern Israel and through experienced and trusted humanitarian organisations that have the necessary on-ground operational capacity to respond.
- Getting Palestinian-Canadians and their families out of Gaza. Note we have already provided a number of flights for Israeli Canadians and their families and have managed to secure passage for a number of Palestinian Canadians and their families to return to Canada. We will not slow down our efforts until we get every Canadian safely home.

### **What I believe needs to happen next**

To have an understanding of where I stand today, I would encourage you to read the latest article by the highly esteemed New York Times columnist Thomas L. Friedman that you can find [here](#). I agree with his analysis, assessment, and recommendations. More specifically, I believe the following:

- Israel needs to be safe and feel secure from attack on all sides – both now and ongoing
- Palestine needs a functioning state – as I believe the only path to peace is a two-state solution. I agree we need a coalition of nations to work with Israel and Palestine to make this happen. The work must start now.

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- Hamas must be defeated – full stop. Going after this terrorist organisation must be done in a way that protects civilian life at all costs.
- Israel must adhere to the rules of war including international law and humanitarian law. They must be held to account if they are not.

### **Why am I not calling for a ceasefire?**

Regarding the calls for a ceasefire - Hamas itself has not called for a ceasefire and there is no evidence that they would abide by one.

Federal Defense Minister Bill Blair was asked why the federal government won't advocate for a ceasefire. He said Hamas, which the federal government lists as a terrorist organisation, cannot be trusted and likely would ignore calls for a ceasefire. **"I have no expectation a terrorist organisation would respect international law or any call for a ceasefire," he said. "Hamas needs to be eliminated as a threat, not just to Israel but to the world." Israel also rightly does not want to negotiate with a terrorist organisation.**

I believe Canada should be part of any coalition that begins to work now in earnest with the United States and other countries including countries in the middle east toward a two-state solution that is based on democratic values, the rule of law and self-determination.

Canada is but one player and a small player in this conflict. But we are using every tool and taking every path that we can to protect civilians, to end the current war and to work toward a long-term sustainable solution.

### **Consult Multiple Sources**

I would like to remind all of us that there is a lot of misinformation and disinformation about the conflict that can lead to confusion and misplaced outrage.

I highly recommend following multiple and reliable sources to be best informed about the situation.

### **Let's all be united in fighting antisemitism – it is unacceptable.**

As of yesterday, the Anti-Defamation League announced a 388% “spike in antisemitic incidents” in U.S. and Canada since Oct. 7, compared to the same period last year. This is profoundly unacceptable. Our Minister of Foreign Affairs Mélanie Joly made a statement today on International Religious Freedom Day:

*“... we celebrate the freedom to manifest and practise our faith or belief, both as individuals and together with others, in peace and security. This cherished freedom, which protects believers and non-believers alike, is a fundamental universal human right that is intrinsically entwined with freedom of expression, assembly and association. As with those basic human rights, freedom of religion or belief plays a pivotal role in nurturing peaceful, prosperous, resilient and inclusive societies.”*

She also said:

*“Canada is committed to promoting freedom of religion or belief internationally and at home. We work with both multilateral and bilateral partners to create a climate of inclusion and respect for diversity, and we speak out strongly against the persecution of minorities on the grounds of religion or belief.”*

*“No person or group should face restrictions on the freedom to practise their faith or belief, whether in the form of laws, policies or actions or through harassment or violence. Canada will continue to stand up for this freedom while promoting diversity and inclusion for all.”*

**This is a fight for our values and for our democracy.**

I want to repeat what I said in my previous statement: global leaders including our own have identified that Hamas is being supported by Iran. Russia and Iran support each other. Both are attacking democratic countries using war and terrorism. We are in a struggle to defend our values, our humanity, and to stand up against these attacks on democracy.

There is no simple solution to the conflict, but the work to find a humanitarian path to end the violence should be driven by one basic principle, and that is the most basic value of all, to protect and cherish human life. It is important for all nations who share these values to accelerate our support for Ukraine, for Israel, for Palestine, for democracy and for world peace.

Julie Dzerowicz



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