Position Paper: Canada and Gaza

A) Canadian MPs must support international efforts to investigate the recent conduct of all parties to the Israeli-Gaza conflict:

1. Support international initiatives to have impartial third-party investigations into alleged violations of international law during the conflict.
2. Insist that the ICC investigate allegations of war crimes by parties to the recent confrontation in Gaza (use of disproportionate force; targeting of civilian institutions; violation of civilians’ rights to flee to safety, to receive medical treatment, and to not sustain damage to their homes and businesses; use of tungsten and DIME bombs, as reported by foreign doctors present in Gaza during the assault; attacks on UNRWA schools and clinics; use of “human shields”, etc.)
3. Support the findings of said investigations, and efforts to bring those responsible to justice and to obtain redress for the victims.

B) Canadian MPs must insist that Israel and Egypt’s blockade of Gaza be lifted immediately and support international proposals to end Gaza’s economic isolation:

1. Condemn the blockade as collective punishment. Work to enable basic supplies to enter Gaza freely: food, school supplies, construction materials, drugs and medical equipment.
2. Insist that Gaza be allowed to export its produce and manufactured goods. Exports present no conceivable threat to Israeli security and export restrictions are crippling the Gazan economy, causing unjustifiable suffering of the civilian population.
3. Support efforts to establish an internationally supervised seaport and airport in Gaza to enable normal commerce and facilitate reconstruction. Currently, the blockade is causing widespread suffering of the civilian population: 38 percent unemployment, anemia and stunted growth of children, and over-dependence of Gaza’s residents on international aid. Israeli leaders have admitted that the purpose of the blockade is to “put Palestinians on a diet,” although such collective punishment violates international law.
4. Support restoration of Gaza’s fishing zone of 20 nautical miles, as per the Oslo Accords.
5. Support full opening of all three crossings, under UN supervision.
6. Enhance trade between Canada and Gaza. Grant Gaza the same privileges as enjoyed by Israel and the West Bank under the CIFTA. Conduct bilateral trade missions.

C) Canadian MPs must acknowledge that it is counter-productive to try to marginalize Hamas:

1. Encourage Palestinian efforts to maintain a Hamas-Fatah unity accord, and insist that Israel allow the unity government to fund Gaza’s civil service and public services. As recently noted by former US President Jimmy Carter and former Irish President Mary Robinson, the Hamas-Fatah reconciliation agreement is a promising development, and “was a major concession by Hamas, opening Gaza to joint control under a consensus government that did not include any Hamas members.”
2. Acknowledge the legitimacy of Gaza Palestinians’ grievances (artificially induced malnutrition and unemployment, extreme restrictions on local fishermen, border shootings of farmers, denial of access to their farm land, frequent aerial attacks, etc.).
3. Establish direct relations with the unity government and the Palestinian Legislative Council, including Hamas legislators. This can be accomplished by participating in fact-finding tours to Gaza and the West Bank and meetings in Europe. Neutral NGOs familiar with Hamas positions and conduct should be invited to the Foreign Affairs Committee.
hearings this fall or winter. MPs should recall that Canada had diplomatic relations with the PLO in the 1980s during both Conservative and Liberal governments, which enabled Canada to constructively engage in the international peace efforts.

4. Respectfully encourage Hamas to continue to moderate its tone, modify certain policies and abandon the use of rocket-fire to respond to Israeli aggression. Respond positively to Hamas’s willingness to reach a long-term ceasefire with Israel. Acknowledge that Hamas has generally upheld ceasefires more diligently than Israel, as has been acknowledged by various Israeli intelligence and military analysts. Be balanced in assessments of ceasefire ruptures.

5. Abandon dogmatic labeling: focus on addressing the root causes of the conflict.

D) Canadian MPs must strengthen Canada’s commitment to UNRWA and other agencies providing humanitarian aid in Gaza and the rest of the occupied Palestinian territories:

1. Reinstate allocations to the UNRWA general fund. Provide a lump sum to make up for Canada’s suspension of funding for core UNRWA programmes in recent years.
2. Allocate generous emergency funding to UNRWA in a timely manner for repairs to civilian infrastructure and homes damaged in the recent Israeli assaults.
3. Invite UNRWA staff and other international aid agencies and human rights groups operating in Gaza to Foreign Affairs committee sessions this fall or winter.
4. Insist that Israel provide compensation for damages inflicted on UNRWA facilities.

E) Canadian MPs should alleviate Gaza Palestinians’ desperation by making a clear commitment to their safety and well-being, and to the timely creation of a viable and sovereign Palestinian state:

2. Support Palestinian accession to the ICC and ICJ. Canada should welcome all states’ accession to the ICJ and the ICC, and stop describing such accession by Palestinians as a “unilateral” measure meriting castigation.
3. Firmly oppose Israeli demands for further territorial concessions by Palestinian negotiators. Point out in international forums that the pre-67 borders are very generous to Israel.
4. Support recognition of Palestine at the UN. Oppose and denounce Israeli machinations to prevent it.
5. Energetically support international calls for an end to occupation.
6. Promptly denounce Israeli “settlement” plans, and call for the removal or relocation of Israel’s Wall. Press for the removal of Israeli colonies “settlements,” and call for Israel to respect the ICJ’s scathing 2004 legal ruling against Israel’s Wall.
7. Pass and enforce legislation prohibiting entry of Israeli “settlement” goods into Canada
8. Criminalize and penalize Canadian individuals, corporations and NGOs for involvement in Israeli “settlement” activities and Israel’s military occupation. In view of the illegality of the settlements under international law, Canada should do its utmost to prevent settlement products from entering the Canadian market. Given repeated UN resolutions calling on Israel to halt the occupation, now in its 47th year, Canada should not allow Canadians to participate or benefit in occupation activities.

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