



ELCIC

*In Mission
for Others*

Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

302-393 Portage Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba R3B 3H6 Canada. www.elcic.ca
Toll free: 1.888.786.6707, Phone: 204.984.9150, Fax: 204.984.9185

January 5, 2008

The Right Honourable Stephen Harper
Prime Minister
House of Commons
Parliament Buildings
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

As the National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada, I am currently in the Middle East with a delegation of Canadian and United States Lutheran Bishops on a pilgrimage whose goals are to deepen our awareness of the situation in the Holy Land, demonstrate accompaniment with our sister church – the Evangelical Lutheran Church of Jordan and the Holy Land (a predominantly Palestinian Christian church), and strengthen our advocacy for a just peace in the region.

Today we met with the speaker of the Jordanian senate and had separate meetings with other government, Christian and Muslim leaders. Tomorrow we meet with His Majesty King Abdullah II and then continue our meetings in Jerusalem and the West Bank over the course of the next ten days. Aside from meetings with church partners, we also have meetings scheduled with the Prime Minister and President of Israel and the President and Prime Minister of the Palestinian Authority.

We are hearing first hand the stories of the current suffering of the people of Gaza. Regrettably, I was most disappointed to read the recent statement by the Honourable Minister Lawrence Cannon on the increase of hostilities between Israel and Hamas that included the following: *"We urge renewed international diplomatic efforts to achieve a sustainable and durable ceasefire, starting with the halting of all rocket attacks on Israel. Canada maintains that the rocket attacks are the cause of this crisis."*

The extreme disproportion between civilian casualties over those of identifiable Hamas leaders and fighters, especially the deaths and injuries to defenceless women and children, belies the understanding that this is strictly a conflict between Israel and Hamas. There is no justifiable defence for this incursion into Gaza with such large casualties. Placing sole blame for the magnitude of the current crisis on these clearly indefensible rocket attacks functionally absolves the Government of Israel from responsibility for the extreme civilian casualties that are being incurred.

I urge you to reconsider the position of the Government of Canada and to join the many voices speaking out for an immediate ceasefire, and then to support negotiations for a just and lasting peace. I also urge you to support any United Nations resolutions that call for an immediate ceasefire in Gaza.

Finally, as a fellow Christian, I urge you to join with me in praying for peace in the land that brought forth the Prince of Peace.

Yours Sincerely,

+ Susan C. Johnson, National Bishop, ELCIC