



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

On Anniversary of Report, Canadian Government still indifferent to attacks on UN

Montreal, February 5, 2009 – By ignoring the recommendations of its own Canadian Forces Board of Inquiry (CF-BOI) report, released one year ago this month, Canada missed a chance to help protect UN entities in Gaza in December and January. The recent bombing of several UN locations in Gaza, notably one UN school sheltering refugees, by Israeli Defense Forces has elicited calls for an international investigation. The Canadian government has placed the blame for the attack on Hamas, and remains silent on Israel's refusal to allow for an international investigation into the shelling.

These events comes one year after the release of the CF-BOI report on the death of Canadian UN Peacekeeper Major Paeta Hess-Von Krudener, in July 2006, which found the Israeli Defense Forces (IDF) responsible for the death which was deemed “tragic and preventable”. The CF-BOI contained 13 recommendations aimed at preventing the recurrence of such a tragedy. In the year since the report, the Canadian government has not demonstrated any interest in implementing the recommendations of the report, which could have helped avert the recent shelling of UN installations in Gaza and helped ensure the security of UN workers and peacekeepers throughout the world.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) finds that Canada's continued inaction in respect to Israeli shelling of UN entities is unacceptable. “Canada's current position shows contempt for UN activities on the ground,” said CJPME Director, Thomas Woodley. “It is imperative for the Canadian government to demand a full international investigation into the events to prevent it from occurring again”.

The recent events in Gaza are cause for alarm. The shelling of UN facilities violates international law as it amounts to the targeting of civilian infrastructure. Even if Israel claims that militants are using UN facilities as ‘human shields’, it does not justify targeting them. The killing of UN staff is a war crime and violates the 4th Geneva Convention's prohibition of the murder of civilians. CJPME calls on the Canadian government to push for an independent investigation so that the individual perpetrators of these incidents are brought to justice. Without a credible legal pursuit, such incidents will continue with impunity.

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About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

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