



Policy Recommendations for Canada

- A. Canada must address itself to a serious improvement in the human and humanitarian needs of the people of Gaza. Canada must acknowledge the irony of a) doing nothing to prevent or even critique Israel's devastating assault on Gaza, and then b) offering handouts to the war-stricken population of Gaza. While Canada's promise of \$4 million (equalling only 0.2% of the physical damage to Gaza through the assault) to Gaza on Jan. 7th was "nice," in the current context it appears cynical and inhumane. Canada must look at the context of the assault and preceding siege of Gaza by Israel, and devise ways to bring long-term improvements for the well-being and future of the people of Gaza.
- B. Canada must reject the status quo in the Middle East. Canada must base a new approach on the root causes of the violence. Israel failed in its three stated aims in its assault: 1) stopping Hamas rocket fire, 2) closing the smuggling tunnels between Gaza and Egypt, and 3) weakening Hamas. Thus, under the status quo, another assault is inevitable. Palestinians will continue to fire rockets in a feeble attempt at resistance and dignity; Israel will continue to strike with overwhelming force; and Gaza will descend to deeper depths of misery and despair as the international community looks on.

Whereas rocket attacks from Gaza began in 2001, the roots of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict go back to prior to 1947. Canada's statements and strategies on the Middle East must reflect an understanding of these roots, and the core needs and rights of *all* peoples in the conflict: a need for justice, a need for self-determination, a need for security, a need for hope for the future.

- C. Canada must call for an end to the mindless and immoral siege of Gaza. Since late 2006, Israel has imposed progressively more restrictive controls on Gaza. Since the summer of 2007, it is described as a "blockade" or "siege." Other than causing intense misery at many levels, the siege appears to have accomplished nothing, as Hamas continues to control the territory, continues to fire rockets, continues to run smuggling tunnels, and continues to command the support of a significant segment of the population. Canada supports the siege, as do most other Western countries, in an unprecedented situation where an occupied people is placed under international sanctions. The siege – condoned by Canada – is illegal and immoral.
- D. Canada must deal with the reality of Hamas. Despite Israel's current siege and recent assault, Hamas will not disappear because it embodies the resistance and hopes of Palestinians living under occupation. Canada must recognize that Hamas is not a monolithic organization but a Palestinian national religious/political movement including people of many views, as well as a militant wing.

A: Canada must address itself to a serious improvement for Gaza

1. Canada must promote a single standard for the "rule of law" in the Middle East. Even if one asserts that Israel was acting in self-defence in its assault on Gaza that began on Dec. 27, 2008, nobody has claimed that Israel respected the two pre-conditions for self defence: proportionality and necessity. Hamas rocket attacks on Israel illegally target civilians, and should be condemned. Israel's "disproportionate" and "unnecessary" strikes are similarly illegal, similarly target civilians, and cause death and destruction on a scale hundreds of times more massive than that of Hamas' rockets. Canada's explicit condemnation of Hamas, and silence concerning Israel is inexplicable, and has neither a legal nor a moral basis.
2. Canada must make a long-term commitment to build and protect hope in Gaza. Hamas' rockets are a desperate act committed by desperate people living under siege and occupation in desperate conditions, with no hope for a better future. In the short-term, massive and sustained aid must be directed to Gaza to counteract years of military strikes and economic strangulation by Israel. CJPME believes, therefore, that Canada must ensure creative ways are found (such as working through the

UNDP, the World Bank or responsible NGOs) to facilitate the flow of Canadian development assistance to Gaza.

- Canada must provide evidence of follow through with its January, 2008 promise of \$300 million in aid over five years to Palestinians.
 - Canada must re-assess its promise of \$4 million in aid to Gaza on Jan. 7th, 2009. (Israel did \$2 billion in physical damage to Gaza through its recent assault.)
 - Canada must reconsider its position on Israel's siege of Gaza (see below.)
3. Canada must demand that UN peacekeepers protect Gaza. As long as Israel continues to strike militarily at Gaza, any developmental gains can be erased in seconds. As a result, direct approaches to protect Gaza and the well-being of its citizens are required. One way to provide this protection is to deploy peacekeepers on the border between Gaza and Israel. With peacekeepers in place, Canada must try to encourage and facilitate longer-term diplomatic solutions to the conflict. Such solutions will inevitably need to address the underlying grievances of all parties.

B: Reject the status quo of war – address the root causes of conflict

1. Canada must challenge tired rhetoric in the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. The Israeli-Palestinian conflict began with a UN decision in the colonial-era world of 1947 to create the modern nation-state of Israel in a land inhabited by another people – the Palestinians. The problem was further exacerbated by Israel's occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Syrian Golan in 1967, an occupation that continues today contrary to norms of international law embodied in the UN Charter. Thus:

- a. The conflict did not begin with the rockets from Gaza which began in 2001,
- b. Nor with Palestinian suicide bombings, the first of which occurred in 1993,
- c. Nor with allegations that one or another side refused 1) to recognize the other, 2) to renounce violence, or 3) to respect previous peace accords.

The current Palestinian leaders, both from Hamas and Fatah, make reasonable demands that any self-respecting people would make – inter alia, the right to live in freedom in their own country, with secure, contiguous borders. Canada must challenge the Israeli rhetoric which seeks to justify its oppression and continuing dispossession of its Palestinian neighbours from their lands, e.g. via Walls, bantustanization, Jewish-only public infrastructure, ethnically-based laws and ethnically-based law enforcement, etc.

2. Canada must exercise its obligations to promote respect for international law. Canada has an obligation under international law to support the norms of international law. Canada, therefore, must condemn the use of force and violence by one state or people against another. Canada, therefore, must promote the Palestinian right of self-determination. Canada, therefore, must support the repatriation and/or compensation of refugees. Canada, therefore, must condemn colonization and other illegal acts that can be perpetrated under military occupation. Canada, therefore, must promote the security of all peoples in the conflict, attributing *equal* value to *all* human life.
3. Canada must support initiatives which lead to fundamental change. For many years, Palestinian leaders from both Fatah and Hamas have been willing to make peace with Israel based on the 1967 borders. The Saudi Peace Plan of 2002, re-introduced in 2007 was also based on the 1967 borders, was accepted by virtually all Arab states, and would have normalized relations between Israel and the Arab world. Canada should push Israel to engage with such initiatives.
4. Canada must reproach actions that entrench the status quo. Because of its military occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Syrian Golan, Israel deepens and entrenches the grievances harboured by its neighbours. Israel regularly strikes militarily, it regularly announces new colonization initiatives, it regularly detains and tortures Palestinians without charging them, etc. Such actions, along with the violence committed by Palestinian militants, must be condemned equally and unequivocally.

C: Canada must act to end the siege of Gaza

1. Canada must condemn the collective punishment of the Siege of Gaza. Canada's silence on the Siege of Gaza is unexplained. The purpose of the Siege is not clear: What are its objectives? How is success against these objectives measured? Canada must demand explanations. In the meantime, the siege stands contrary to both international humanitarian and human rights law.
 - a. The siege blocks the movement of **industrial and agricultural supplies** into and out of Gaza. This has killed industry in Gaza, and has prevented Palestinians from earning their livelihoods, a right under international humanitarian law.
 - b. The siege blocks **infrastructure supplies** from being imported into Gaza. For lack of parts and repairs, Gaza's power, water and sewage systems are unable to fully function. This triggers other violations of law relating to the protection of civilian health and hygiene guaranteed under international humanitarian law.
 - c. The siege severely limits **medical supplies, medical evacuations and access by medical personnel** into and out of Gaza. This prevents civilians from accessing medical care, a right protected under international humanitarian law.
 - d. The siege limits **aid shipments and access by aid personnel** into and out of Gaza. This prevents aid to civilians in conflict, a right protected under international humanitarian law.
 - e. The siege limits **movement of civilians and students**. Israel prevents any entry into and out of Gaza for months at a time. Barring proven security concerns, the right to travel is a right guaranteed under human rights law.
 - f. The siege has limited **media access** into Gaza. It is not clear how access by the media has an impact on Israel's security, yet such a move obviously prevents transparency and accountability on the part of Israel and Hamas.
2. Canada must contextualize any statement on the conflict regarding "self defence." All peoples have the right to self-defence. By any objective measure, the people of Gaza have a much more pressing need to defend themselves than do the Israelis, as thousands of Gazans have been killed by Israel since 2005, versus about 20 Israeli deaths from rocket attacks since 2001. One must also point out that Israel is maintaining a siege of Gaza, and not the other way around.

D: Canada must deal with the reality of Hamas

1. Canada must stop isolating Hamas and encourage it to evolve its positions and abjure violence. Hamas is not a monolithic organization. It is also a religious and social organization that has deep roots among the Palestinian people. Hamas devotes much of its estimated \$70 million or more annual budget to an extensive social services network. It funds schools, orphanages, mosques, healthcare clinics, soup kitchens, and sports leagues. Approximately 90 percent of Hamas' work is in social, welfare, cultural, and educational activities, according to Israeli scholar Reuven Paz.
2. Canada must recognize that there are significant differences between the external leadership of Hamas located in Damascus and the internal leadership in Gaza. The leaders of Hamas have frequently declared their support for a two state solution, based on the 1967 borders. Canada's goal should be to strengthen the hand of the moderates within Hamas, especially those in the internal leadership who tend to be more pragmatic than hardliners in Damascus. Canada, despite pressure to declare the PLO a terrorist organization never did so and consequently was able to maintain contacts and moderating influence with that group in the years preceding Israel's recognition of the PLO.

For more Information...

For more information and background on Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East, the assault and siege of Gaza, and related topics, please consult the CJPME Website at <http://www.cjpme.org> or contact CJPME at (514) 745-8491.