



November 3, 2023

The Rt. Hon. Justin Trudeau, PC, MP
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario
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Dear Prime Minister:

I am writing to you on behalf of the National Union of Public and General Employees (NUPGE) and our more than 425,000 members across the country. I write with a heavy heart regarding the severe escalation of violence in Israel and Palestine.

I was dismayed by Hamas's brutal attack on Israeli civilians on October 7 and the taking of hostages. As NUPGE expressed in its [statement](#) on October 12, we unequivocally condemn these actions by Hamas, which also violate international law.

We express solidarity with Jewish people, in Israel and around the world, who are experiencing immense grief and fear. We call for all hostages to be released.

Following the October 7 attack, Israel's bombardment and "complete siege" of Gaza have led to unimaginable loss of life, injury, and suffering among Palestinians. The violence, and then the cutting off of food, water, fuel, and electricity and the forced displacement of over 1 million civilians, are inhumane, not to mention a violation of international law. The scale of violence and its impacts are difficult to comprehend. Over 8,500 Palestinians in Gaza have been reported killed by Israeli attacks this month. The United Nations and humanitarian agencies are warning that the food and water situation in Gaza is dire, as is the power situation and the fate of life-saving health care infrastructure.



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Israel's latest escalation serves to worsen the humanitarian crisis in Gaza, where people have been living under occupation and experiencing a blockade for years. Human rights experts and organizations have found that the Israeli government's treatment of Palestinians constitutes apartheid. Now, human rights and international law experts have warned that Israel's latest actions towards Gaza pose the risk of genocide. NUPGE joins with the many voices, including Jewish and Palestinian people around the world, who call for an end to these horrors.

NUPGE continues to call for an immediate ceasefire in Israel-Palestine and for international and humanitarian law to be respected. We have been concerned by the Canadian government's seemingly unequivocal support for Israel to defend itself at any cost. Palestinian lives are no less valuable than Israeli lives, and civilians are not an inevitable casualty. NUPGE condemns the targeting of any civilians. Both Israeli forces and Hamas must be held accountable for their war crimes.

On October 21, NUPGE joined numerous labour, faith, Arab, Jewish, and civil society organizations across Canada in [calling](#) on your government to call for an immediate ceasefire, for an end to the blockade of Gaza, and for the restoration of humanitarian aid and access to the basic necessities of life. I reiterate these calls once again, and urge you to work with your international counterparts to work towards these outcomes.

We hope that a ceasefire and meaningful opening of humanitarian corridors will allow for urgently needed and life-saving relief. But we also hope that it is the first step on a path to address the root of the current situation. NUPGE joins the calls for a just and lasting peace in the region, which must include an end to the brutal occupation of Palestinian territory.

As a union made up of workers who, primarily, deliver public services of all kinds, we know that public sector workers are often on the front lines in a crisis and are among the casualties of war. Our solidarity is also with the health care workers, in particular, who are caring for the sick and wounded and have been subjected to violence.

We know that many of our members are personally impacted by the crisis.

We are deeply concerned by the rise in anti-Semitism, Islamophobia, and anti-Arab sentiment and actions being seen here in Canada and globally. We condemn this hatred and discrimination, and urge your government to do the same and to work to combat hate.

Around the world, we have been concerned by the move by some governments to crack down on civil liberties, especially against those who speak up for Palestinian human rights. And we are troubled that speaking up for Palestinian human rights or criticizing the Israeli government's actions is often conflated with anti-Semitism or supporting terrorism. We must remain vigilant against hate, but we must stand up for human rights and justice for all. I urge your government to ensure that fundamental rights and freedoms, like the right to protest and freedom of expression, are respected in Canada.

Canada prides itself on speaking out for human rights, for peace, and for justice. But we must not do so selectively. Both Israelis and Palestinians—indeed all people in the region—are deserving of peace, security, and human rights. This is a moment that demands we show, and act on, our shared humanity. I implore your government to do so.

I look forward to your response.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Bert Blundon". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Bert" and last name "Blundon" clearly distinguishable.

Bert Blundon
President

cc: The Hon. Mélanie Joly, Minister of Foreign Affairs
The Hon. Pierre Poilievre, Leader of the Conservative Party of Canada
Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the New Democratic Party
Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party of Canada
Bea Bruske, President, Canadian Labour Congress
Jason MacLean, Secretary-Treasurer, NUPGE
National Executive Board