

Science for Peace Statement on Israeli-Hamas War in Gaza
Updated May 1, 2025

Members of Science for Peace, along with communities, organizations, and massive numbers of street protesters worldwide, are appalled and horrified by the Israeli military's ongoing and seemingly unstoppable genocidal assault on the people of Gaza.

We join many others in a desperate plea for a ceasefire and negotiations in a war being fought largely on the bodies of non-combatants, and now over a year old. Almost 44,000 people have been killed since Oct 7 of 2023. According to a recent six-month study by the UN's Human Rights Office, close to 70% of those lost lives have been women and children - a dreadful situation seemingly acceptable to both Hamas and Israel's military command.

An estimated 11,300 children have now died in Israel's pitiless onslaught. Night after night, we watch the unbearable images of dead and mutilated children, and those begging for food, or wandering among the rubble traumatized by the loss of parents and siblings. We are shocked at the moral deficit of Western governments who have chosen not to send Israel an immediate stand-down order, and who continue to be complicit in this horror by sending weapons.

The current war, we believe, was predictable and preventable. Science for Peace forcefully condemns the murderous attack by Hamas on Israeli civilians in October of 2023, an action which has caused trauma in that country and has generated fear in Jewish communities all over the world. We stand with the Israeli families campaigning for a ceasefire and a return of their loved-ones held hostage.

But the backstory to Hamas' brutal and politically destructive action are the abuses occasioned by Israel's illegal occupation, well documented by Israeli and Palestinian historians, UN Special Rapporteurs, NGOs such as Amnesty International, Human Rights Watch, B'tselem, and many others. The longstanding humiliations and deprivations experienced by Palestinians, the land theft, the home demolitions, incarcerations and torture, and the imprisonment and killing of children all form the preamble to this terrible war, with its potentially fateful geopolitical implications.

As an organization committed to non-violent solutions to conflict – that is, negotiations, provision of urgent life-saving aid, and long-term societal changes to eliminate the causes of war – we urge the Canadian government to go beyond its vote at the UN for an “immediate humanitarian ceasefire”, and actively urge Israel to unilaterally cease and desist. Silence in the face of atrocities signals complicity, as does Canada's refusal of an outright moratorium on arms shipments to Israel.

Canada must also stop providing diplomatic cover for collective punishment, in the guise of its insistence that “Israel has a right to defend itself.” As history tells us,

collective punishment only closes the space for peace partners to emerge; Canada must not continue to sanction actions that undercut the path to negotiations and long-term peace. Canada must ensure it is not enabling the impunity with which Israel is acting. There is no long-term security for Israelis, or for Jewish people in general, in the devastation of Gaza or in the similar indiscriminate bombing campaign in Lebanon, both of which have the region teetering on a wider and even more lethal conflict.

After all the bloodshed, all the razing of Gazan neighborhoods, and the displacement of its peoples, Israel's stated war goal of eradicating Hamas is no closer to realization, and is an impossibility since, as long as Israel's mistreatment of Palestinians continue, some resistance group will surge.

The cycles of violence that afflict Israel/Palestine can only end through negotiations based on security for Israelis, and for Palestinians, an end to occupation and a settlement accounting for years of dispossession. It appears likely that both Hamas and the Netanyahu government, following their own interests, will resist such a finale to the conflict.

We take inspiration from Non-Violence International and other Palestinian practitioners of non-violence who believe Palestinian liberation can be won without taking up arms, and from joint Israeli and Palestinian efforts like Standing Together, Combatants for Peace, the Israeli Committee Against Home Demolitions and many others. The Palestinian and Israeli activists organizing together on the ground for justice, and an end to Israel's siege of Gaza, provide a ray of light in the darkness. They are modeling a future where the subjugation of one people by another no longer exists. We need to amplify these voices, as well as those astoundingly compassionate Israelis who lost loved ones Oct 7, 2023, and who in their weeping have asked that their government not perpetrate the same suffering on Gaza's civilians.

We implore the Canadian government to:

1. Impose a total embargo on weapons, parts, and ammunition transfers to Israel. Under pressure from activists and the NDP, the government put a freeze on new arms permits to Israel, and disallowed Canadian-made weapons to be sent to Gaza via U.S. companies, but prior permits for export are still in place. These must be cancelled.
2. Campaign for an immediate ceasefire and for UN intervention, including a demilitarized peacekeeping force. As a party to the Genocide Convention, Canada must do everything within its power to prevent genocide in Gaza.
3. Use its influence to promote corridors for urgent humanitarian relief, including medical supplies, food and potable water, diesel supplies, emergency shelters, and the restoration of electrical power.

4. Press for the release of the Palestinian prisoners who have not been charged or who have not committed serious crimes (throwing stones at soldiers should not be seen as a serious crime). Over 10,000 Palestinians are currently imprisoned, many without charge or trial. Protest the torture and abuses in Israel's Sde Teiman prison.

5. Become a major and uncompromising force for the promotion of global human rights, rather than continuing to selectively notice their violation. The bombing of civilians, the withholding of water and food, the destruction of homes, forced migration, all crimes against humanity, must be addressed boldly.

These demands are essential to restore temporary peace in the region, but they will prove futile if a long-term solution is not accepted by Israelis and Palestinians. The Canadian government must cease its complicity in this war and shift its focus to helping develop a framework by which Israelis and Palestinians can negotiate their way to a just and durable peace.

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