



# Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

600-177 Lombard Avenue, Winnipeg, Manitoba, R3B 0W5, Canada

Phone: 204.984.9150, Toll Free: 1.888.786.6707, Fax: 204.984.9185, Website: [www.elcic.ca](http://www.elcic.ca)

May 17, 2018

The Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
[pm@pm.gc.ca](mailto:pm@pm.gc.ca)

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
[chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca](mailto:chrystia.freeland@parl.gc.ca)

Dear Prime Minister and Minister Freeland:

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), I write to express my deep concern over the current situation in Israel-Palestine and to urge the Government of Canada to respect international law as it acts to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

I am appalled and saddened by this week's escalation of Israeli military action against protestors in Gaza. Many reports indicate that at least 60 Palestinians, including six children, have died and more than 2,000 have been injured as a result of Israel's disproportionate use of force. The ELCIC joins our partner church, the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land, in condemning these killings and the unjustified and disproportionate use of force against unarmed civilians, as we condemn all violence. We mourn with the families of the dead and dying and pray for the recovery of the injured. We believe that violent actions against Palestinian civilians will hinder the potential for peace and reconciliation between Israel and Palestine.

Our church continues to pray and advocate for a peaceful and just solution to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict in accordance with international law. We want to see two viable and sovereign independent states, living side by side with agreed upon borders, and with Jerusalem as a shared capital and a shared city for Christians, Jews and Muslims. Jerusalem is a very special city, holy to three religions, and should be a place of peace, justice and reconciliation. We insist that there should be freedom of access to holy sites for all.

I recognize that the Israeli-Palestinian conflict has deep roots and a long legacy of violence on individuals, families, and communities in the Holy Land. May 14, 2018 marked 70 years of Israel's independence. The opening of the US embassy on that day, with its recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel, further destabilize the relationship between Israel and Palestine.

May 15, 2018 marked 70 years of the Nakba, the ongoing catastrophe of displacement for the Palestinian people. At the heart of the conflict is a long-standing occupation that violates international law in multiple ways.

In 2009, the ELCIC National Convention adopted a Resolution on Peace in the Holy Land that remains relevant. The ELCIC:

- Supports a secure state of Israel and a viable state for Palestinians, including a contiguous West Bank;
- Supports an end to terrorism and violence by individuals, organizations and states against innocent civilians and bringing to justice those who commit such crimes;
- Calls on the Government of Canada to promote a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East;
- Opposes the occupation of territories (Golan Height, East Jerusalem, and the West Bank) as called for in UN Resolution 446 and 465;
- Reiterates that Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and call for a cessation of all settlement activities and a withdrawal from settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory to the 1967 armistice boundary (the "Green Line"); and
- Calls upon all governments in the region to fully respect human rights and international humanitarian.

I call on the Government of Canada to communicate these concerns to the Government of Israel and to step up its role as a broker of peace for both Israel and Palestine.

Earlier in this month, I visited the West Bank as part of meetings with partner churches. I felt and saw first-hand the tension, frustration and despair being felt by many. Sadly, the general feeling is that the situation in the Holy Land is much worse than when the ELCIC adopted our resolution in 2009. Yet, our partners in the Holy Land remain committed to peace, justice and reconciliation: through prayer, negotiation, action and advocacy. Our church partners have asked the ELCIC to communicate with you and especially to impress on you the urgency of the situation.

I appreciate and support the government's intention to apologize for turning away the "MS St. Louis", which led to the deaths of 254 passengers as part of the Holocaust. Our country failed the Jewish people at that time. Let us make sure that current inaction does not necessitate a future apology to the Palestinians, and especially the inhabitants of Gaza.

The ELCIC remains committed to prayer, education, accompaniment and advocacy for peace in the Holy Land.

Yours in Christ

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson", with a small cross symbol to the left.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson  
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

cc: Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Official Opposition  
Mr. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the NDP  
Hon. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party

Hon. Erin O'Toole, Official Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs  
Hon. H el ene Laverdi ere, NDP Critic for Foreign Affairs  
Mr. Jeff Wheeler, Green Party Critic for International Affairs

ELCIC National Church Council