



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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The Honourable Lawrence Cannon
Minister of Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
Ottawa ON K1A 0A6

May 28, 2010

Dear Minister Cannon,

As National Bishop of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), I write to you in order to express our deep concern regarding recent news of Israeli actions against Palestinians in the Occupied Territories. Amendments to two Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) Orders took effect in the third week of April 2010. Military Orders 1649 and 1650 classify Palestinians in the West Bank who do not have documentation issued by the local Israel Defence Forces commander as “infiltrators” in their own land.

The military orders enable the IDF to deport tens of thousands of Palestinians from the West Bank and prosecute them on charges of being infiltrators, which can result in long prison terms. It targets thousands of Palestinians from Gaza who work and live in the West Bank, Palestinians who have identification papers from neighbouring countries, and foreign women who are married to Palestinians residing in the West Bank.

The orders may also be used to expel Israeli and international human rights activists, including Canadians, from the West Bank. As the Israeli military has hundreds of fixed and mobile checkpoints throughout the Occupied Territories, it is impossible to travel any distance without being forced to go through military controls.

As a church in partnership with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL), the ELCIC is deeply concerned about the continuing situation facing all people in that region. We believe in, hope for and pray for a secure state of Israel, a viable state for Palestinians, and a place where all may practice their faith, feed their families and build their communities. Last June, members of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada meeting in convention expressed:

- “ELCIC support for “the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East, including the creation of a Palestinian state living side by side in peace and security with Israel” (Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade Policy);

- ELCIC support for a secure state of Israel and a viable state for Palestinians, including a contiguous West Bank;
- ELCIC encouragement to undertake further measures to reduce poverty, unemployment and improve service for Palestinians and express appreciation for funding for such services as the Gerontology Unit at Augusta Victoria Hospital; and
- ELCIC's support for an end to terrorism and violence by individuals, organizations and states against innocent civilians and bringing to justice those who commit such crimes.”
(From ELCIC Resolution #NC-09-09)

In January, 2009, I visited Israel and the Westbank for the third time. The Israelis, the Palestinians and all who live in this beautiful, holy land remain close to my heart. The recent amendments to IDF seem to decrease space for hard working people to earn a living and develop their society, and increase the potential for harassment and human rights violations.

I request that the Government of Canada pressure the Israeli government to rescind these military orders. Canada and Israel share a strong relationship, as evidenced by the commemorative stamp issued by Canada Post this spring. Upholding international covenants signed by both nations should be a key part of that relationship.

Yours in Christ,



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

cc: Bob Rae, Liberal Foreign Affairs Critic
Paul Dewar, NDP Foreign Affairs Critic,
Francine Lalonde, Bloc Québécois Foreign Affairs Critic
Ehud Barak, Minister of Defence,
Her Excellency Miriam Ziv, Israeli Ambassador to Canada