

February 21, 2008

Stephen Harper, P.C., M.P.  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Langevin Building, 80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

Maxime Bernier, P.C., M.P.  
Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Lester B. Pearson Building, Tower "A", 10th Floor  
125 Sussex Drive  
Ottawa, Ontario  
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Dear Sirs:

On behalf of our 570,000 members, we call on you to urge the Israeli government to temporarily lift its economic sanctions imposed on the Gaza Strip territory on humanitarian grounds and that you encourage members of the international community to do the same.

The situation in the Gaza Strip is having a huge humanitarian impact. Therefore, we urge the Canadian government to petition the Israeli government to lift its sanctions and cease its apparent siege of the region.

We, along with United Nations envoy for Palestine John Dugard, also call on the United Nations to start serving in a mediation role between the rival factions of Fatah and Hamas in the region.

The recent Gaza troubles are evidence of a human rights crisis of huge concern. In a BBC interview, Dugard said he "was very struck by the sense of hopelessness among the Palestinian people." He added that this was due to "the crushing effect of human rights violations". He also said that Israeli restrictions on Palestinians' freedom of movement were a major factor, arguing that although Israel did have a threat to its security, "its response is very disproportionate."

News reports inform us of the tragic need for medical supplies that are not reaching the region because of the sanctions. This has threatened the lives of patients in Gaza Strip hospitals, leaving civilians injured in bombings and other military actions without medical attention.

Technical experts have noted that the Israeli sanctions have prevented the free movement of goods and that has, as one group put it, "immobilized the importing of spare parts, pumps, pipes and other necessary accessories for the water and sanitation providing facilities." They added that the distribution of drinking water and the collection and treatment of wastewater completely rely on fuel and electricity that the Israelis have cut off in the Gaza Strip.

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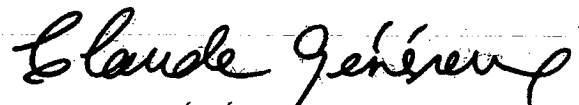
Water and wastewater shortages due to the sanctions could lead to other environmental problems in the region where municipal services are being curtailed due to the rigid sanctions.

Tens of thousands of our members provide these important services to families in Canadian communities, so they can appreciate the harm that is being done by the sanctions at this time. Therefore, while we acknowledge the political volatility of the situation in the region, we repeat that we would urge the Canadian government to take this action on humanitarian grounds.

Yours truly,



PAUL MOIST  
National President



CLAUDE GÉNÉREUX  
National Secretary-Treasurer

c.c.: Ken Georgetti, President, Canadian Labour Congress  
CUPE National Executive Board Members

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