

NGO Joint GAZA Press Release:

Leading Canadian humanitarian organizations mark one month of violence in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank; Call for immediate ceasefire and humanitarian access

November 7th, 2023 — Today in Ottawa, Canada's leading humanitarian agencies held a press conference on Parliament Hill to mark the one-month anniversary of escalations of violence in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank. Together, the agencies provided a humanitarian update on the critical situation on the ground, and renewed their call to the Government of Canada to urgently demand a ceasefire, unconditional humanitarian access to Gaza, and the protection of civilians and humanitarian personnel.

Since October 7th, unprecedented violence in Gaza, Israel and the West Bank has resulted in a humanitarian catastrophe. Thousands of civilians – including children – are being killed, and with millions more suffering as a result of countless attacks, relentless bombing, hunger, dehydration, sickness and the absence of clean water, fuel, healthcare and humanitarian assistance.

While the organizations and local partners are providing some immediate assistance to civilians on the ground, they are highly restricted in their ability to assist due to the total blockade, lack of safe humanitarian access and extreme violence that poses a significant risk to humanitarian workers and civilians who need to access humanitarian support.

Day by day, hundreds of innocent civilians are being killed in ongoing violence. The following organizations urge the government of Canada to take a strong and resolute stance in demanding a ceasefire in order to prevent further loss of civilian life and allow for the delivery of critical humanitarian assistance: **CARE Canada, Cooperation Canada, Development and Peace, Human Concern International, Humanity & Inclusion, Islamic Relief Canada, Oxfam Canada, Oxfam-Québec, Médecins du Monde Canada, Mennonite Central Committee Canada, and Save the Children.**

Quotes from the press conference speakers:

"The lives of two million people are at stake. The healthcare system in Gaza is collapsing, hospitals are devastated and lack the capacity to treat the tens of thousands of wounded. Healthcare givers are working under catastrophic hygiene and fatigue conditions, facing an acute shortage of resources exacerbated by the total blockade and grossly inadequate provision of humanitarian aid."

— **Nadja Pollaert, Executive Director, Médecins du Monde Canada**

"This is not the time to look away, we must be outraged by the unbearable situation that civilians are living. It cannot go on for weeks. The parties to the conflict must listen to the increasingly growing voices of civil society organizations around the world demanding a ceasefire. Only a ceasefire will allow humanitarian organizations to provide aid that meets the enormous vital needs, with the assurance that it will serve civilians. This is the only way. It's now. That's enough." — **Béatrice Vaugrante, Executive Director, Oxfam-Québec**

"Gaza has become a graveyard for children with one child being killed every 10 minutes. In one month, more than 4,008 children have been killed—most of them killed while at home with their families and a huge number of them have been killed in south Gaza, where a million people were told to flee. It's unimaginable. Homes, hospitals and schools are being targeted and children are paying with their lives, including more than 615 babies and toddlers. This is a grave violation of children's rights." — **Danny Glenwright, President and CEO of Save the Children**

"Our teams on the ground are risking their lives every day, under siege and under fire. They face unimaginable challenges and threats, as they work tirelessly to save lives and bring any relief they can. The attention has been focused on getting a handful of trucks into the enclave. Civilians in Gaza

desperately need what little food and water is onboard these trucks, but it feels futile when bombs continue to kill so many every day. We need to see an immediate and permanent ceasefire now. We cannot afford to wait any longer.” — **Usama Khan, CEO, Islamic Relief Canada**

Quotes from organizations endorsing the call for a ceasefire:

“The humanitarian situation in Gaza is beyond catastrophic and we are receiving heart wrenching messages from our colleagues and partners trapped inside fighting for survival. We are gravely concerned for the lives of around 500,000 Palestinians, alongside the more than 200 Israeli and other national hostages, currently trapped in a ‘siege within a siege’ in northern Gaza. Israel’s decision to deprive civilians in Gaza of items essential to their survival, such as food, water, fuel, medicines, and other aid, amounts to collective punishment and a violation of international humanitarian law. We cannot just standby, as the international community we have a responsibility to end this nightmare and ensure civilians can get the help they so desperately need.” — **Lauren Ravon, Executive Director, Oxfam Canada**

“MCC has worked in Palestine and Israel for more than 70 years, alongside partners committed to a just peace. Today, those partners are crying out for an end to violence and injustice - partners like Al-Najd Developmental Forum, currently risking their lives to deliver humanitarian assistance with very limited supplies in the midst of ongoing violence in Gaza. In the words of Palestinian Pastor Ashraf Tannous: 'I pray that peace may prevail. I pray that love may prevail. And I pray that people may feel our suffering and act accordingly.'” — **Rick Cober Bauman, Executive Director, Mennonite Central Committee Canada**

“I am very concerned about reports reaching CARE of women undergoing emergency C-sections without proper anesthesia. Pregnant women in the region cannot access adequate pre- and post-natal care that they need for safe delivery. This increases the risk for mothers and newborns and could threaten their lives and the lives of their babies. We need an immediate ceasefire in order to provide essential humanitarian aid including medical supplies, safe access to medical care, water, food, and fuel.” — **Barbara Grantham, President and CEO, CARE Canada**

“We are particularly concerned by the devastating humanitarian crisis in the Gaza Strip. People with disabilities are among the most vulnerable populations, facing enormous challenges and difficulties in protecting themselves from violence and getting the help they need. According to our information, more than 15% of the displaced people inside the Gaza Strip suffer from a disability. Unfortunately, most shelters are not well equipped to meet their needs, and access to health services, including rehabilitation, is critical at the moment. We are calling for an immediate ceasefire so our teams and partners can get the necessary aid to those who need it most.” — **Anne Delorme, Executive Director of Humanity & Inclusion Canada**

“We are scandalized by this government’s hesitation in the face of the year’s worst humanitarian crisis! Only an immediate ceasefire and a secure humanitarian corridor can end the carnage and the unnecessary suffering of 2.2 million people that desperately need peace and support. Canada must call for this without delay. Failure to do so will stain us as a nation.” — **Carl Héту, Executive Director of Development and Peace — Caritas Canada**

“For over twenty years, Human Concern International has been responding to the needs of Palestinians in Gaza, supporting the most vulnerable, which include orphans and families. Today, we are grappling with the grim reality that many of these individuals have been either killed, displaced, or have vanished in the chaos. We face an acute crisis, marked by severe shortages of water, healthcare emergencies, and an increasing number of children left orphaned and vulnerable. In the face of this escalating humanitarian disaster, we, alongside our partners, are urgently calling for a ceasefire. It is incumbent upon Canada to prioritize this humanitarian emergency above all else.” — **Mahmuda Khan, Executive Director, Human Concern International**

For all media queries, please contact:

- **CARE Canada:** Aniela Cockburn, 613-890-0355, aniela.cockburn@care.ca
- **Human Concern International:** Iftikhar Shaikh Ahmad, 819-208-6025, iftikhar@humanconcern.org
- **Humanity & Inclusion Canada:** Fatou Thiam, 514-229-0761, f.thiam@hi.org
- **Islamic Relief Canada:** Mashaal Saaed, 647-919-1580, mashaal.saeed@islamicreliefcanada.org
- **Médecins du Monde Canada:** Mélissa Cabana, 514-799-8985, melissa.cabana@medecinsdumonde.ca
- **Mennonite Central Committee Canada:** Laura Kalmar, 1-844-732-2346, laurakalmar@mcccanada.ca
- **Oxfam-Québec :** Victoria Amigo, 514-606-4663 | victoria.amigo@oxfam.org
- **Oxfam Canada :** Vita Sgardello, 613-799-0234, vita.sgardello@oxfam.org
- **Save the Children:** Tiffany Baggetta, 647-517-4563, tbaggetta@savethechildren.ca
- **Development and peace Caritas Canada:** Minaz Kerawala 514-867-4498, mkerawala@devp.org