



# The Anglican Church of Canada / L'Église anglicane du Canada

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February 9, 2018

The Hon. Marie-Claude Bibeau, PC, MP  
Minister for International Development and La Francophonie,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A6

Re: Canadian cooperation and leadership in the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA)

Dear Minister Bibeau,

Warmest greetings from the Anglican Church of Canada. It is good to be in correspondence with you again concerning the Government of Canada's strong commitment to the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), and to providing education and healthcare to Palestinian refugees in Jordan, Lebanon, Syria, the West Bank and Gaza.

We are all aware UNRWA faces a serious challenge as a result of the recent announcement by the US government to reduce its 2018 pledge to \$60 million, a reduction of 84% from its 2017 contribution of \$350 million. We are deeply concerned about what this means for Palestinian refugee children, women and men.

We know providing humanitarian assistance and responding to the needs of the poorest and most vulnerable is a priority of Canada's foreign policy and international development agenda. It is also a priority of the Anglican Church of Canada, especially in our covenant of partnership with the Episcopal Diocese of Jerusalem and its medical institutions in East Jerusalem, the West Bank and Gaza. We have been longstanding on-the-ground supporters of diocesan efforts to alleviate the suffering of Palestinian families without financial means or access to basic health care.

We write to urge Canada step forward to provide global leadership and action. The reduction of UNRWA funding jeopardizes access to basic education for more than 500,000 children and 700 UNRWA schools, and the future of those children. Primary health care for Palestinian families is put at risk, including pre-natal care. Consultation and visits with our partner, the UNRWA-supported Al Ahli Arab Hospital, Gaza City, provide unequivocal evidence of the direct impacts reduced funding will have upon availability of treatments, medical supplies, electricity, food and wages. International, interfaith organizations such as Project Rozana, and civil society groups, including Physicians for Human Rights Israel also attest to these grave impacts, with particular concern for the vulnerability and needs of Gazan women with cancer seeking medical care.

We ask Canada join with other states demonstrating multilateral cooperation and collaboration, supporting UNRWA in saying to Palestinian refugees their rights and future matter by:

1. Frontloading the Canadian 2018 contribution and as possible increasing funding to the Agency, to ensure UNRWA services, particularly its 700 schools and 137 medical clinics, are sustained throughout the year; and
2. Joining UNRWA in creating new funding alliances and initiatives to ensure the dignity of Palestinian refugee children and their families is preserved through all its services (education, health, relief and social services, camp improvement and rehabilitation, humanitarian aid, protection).

We welcomed Foreign Minister Freeland's statement that Canada is committed to contribute in positive ways to an international order based on rules, in which "more powerful countries are constrained in their treatment of smaller ones by standards that are internationally respected, enforced and upheld." We continue to believe Canada possesses the material and moral resources to make UNRWA's health and education program for Palestinian refugees stronger and more robust, in collaboration with other governments. As Chair of the G7, Canada has an opportunity to raise greater awareness that health and education are the building-blocks for sound development and eventual peace and stability.

For this to be truly effective in the long-term, efforts to secure a just and lasting peace in the region are urgently needed. We continue to encourage the Government of Canada to support initiatives resulting in peace with justice between Israel and Palestine.

We pray for your leadership in these most urgent UNRWA matters, and in Canada's efforts toward a more just, peaceful and equitable world for all.

Yours sincerely,



The Most Rev. Fred Hiltz  
Primate  
Anglican Church of Canada

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