



Amnesty International

CANADA

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The Honourable Lawrence Cannon
Minister of Foreign Affairs
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By fax: 613 996 8969

February 23, 2009

Dear Minister,

Amnesty International members in Canada and around the world continue to be gravely concerned about the situation in the Gaza Strip. By any measure the civilian population in Gaza has endured a human rights and humanitarian catastrophe. We have written to you several times since the beginning of January, outlining our concerns and laying out steps that we believe Canada and the international community should take to ensure that international human rights and humanitarian law obligations are upheld. Thousands of Amnesty International supporters across the country have sent similar messages and petitions to the Canadian government.

On January 14 we wrote to you urging that Canada push for a comprehensive arms embargo to be imposed on all parties to the conflict in Gaza. We also called on Canada to adopt an embargo with respect to its own direct or indirect arms transfers to the parties to this conflict. We continue to call for an embargo to be imposed. Today we have released the enclosed new report, *Fuelling Conflict: Foreign arms supplies to Israel/Gaza*, which documents the sources and nature of arms transfers to Israeli forces and to Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups.

With the release of this report we are renewing our appeal to the international community to impose an arms embargo. We urge Canada to take a lead role within the United Nations in pressing for such an embargo. Specifically, we are calling for:

- an immediate, comprehensive UN Security Council arms embargo on Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups until effective mechanisms are in place to ensure that weapons or munitions and other military equipment will not be used to commit serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law.

At the same time we believe it is crucial that all states act immediately to unilaterally suspend all transfers of military equipment, assistance and munitions, as well as those which may be diverted, to Israel, Hamas and other Palestinian armed groups until there is no longer a substantial risk that such equipment will be used for serious violations of international human rights law and international humanitarian law. We call on Canada to take immediate steps to do so.

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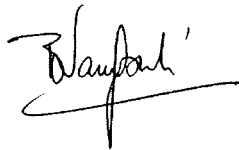
The suspension should include all indirect exports *via* other countries, the transfer of military components and technologies and any brokering, financial or logistical activities that would facilitate such transfers. This latter point is of particular importance in Canada's case, as Canadian-built components are included in many US weapons systems that are exported in Israel. It is vital that Canada's suspension of transfers include indirect transfers through the United States or other third countries.

Finally, Minister Cannon, Amnesty International has now collected evidence of possible war crimes and other serious violations of international humanitarian law in Gaza and south Israel. There must be full accountability for such crimes. Amnesty International has called on the international community to establish without delay a thorough, independent and impartial investigation of these possible violations of international humanitarian law, including Israeli attacks on civilians and civilian buildings in the Gaza Strip, disproportionate attacks, and indiscriminate rocket attacks by Hamas and other Palestinian armed group against civilian population areas of southern Israel. Canada is a recognized leader in the global struggle against impunity. We look to Canada to take a leadership role in ensuring that these very serious allegations are fully and properly investigated.

Sincerely,



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