

August 1, 2025

Re: Gaza Humanitarian Crisis

As the war in Gaza continues for almost two years now, we are heartbroken by the immense and mounting human cost, both for Israelis and Palestinians.

We mourn with Israelis grieving the losses of October 7, the ongoing suffering of the hostages that remain in captivity and their families and loved ones, those struggling while separated from their families due to extended reservist duty, and those living with ongoing trauma and fear. We also grieve for the millions of Palestinians suffering under occupation in the West Bank and under siege in the Gaza Strip, facing increased settler violence, displacement, widespread destruction, malnutrition, separation, and death.

It has been clear for many months, and never more so than now, that escalating military pressure and restricting humanitarian aid have not brought Israel any closer to releasing the hostages or ending the war.

While the Israeli military's recent announcement of additional humanitarian measures, such as aid air drops, improved access for aid convoys through designated humanitarian corridors, and temporary cessations in fighting, is a step toward addressing this crisis, it is far from sufficient. What is needed is a significantly more comprehensive and sustained humanitarian strategy.

Our Jewish tradition teaches that all people are created *b'tzelem Elohim* - in the image of God - and demands that we feed the hungry and care for the vulnerable.

As Jewish leaders, we are deeply committed to the State of Israel as a Jewish homeland, and believe that both Jews and Palestinians deserve to live in safety within secure, clearly-defined borders. Lasting peace must be achieved through diplomacy and negotiation.

We are shocked and dismayed by members of the current Israeli government who, while claiming to act in the name of Jewish values, make statements that blatantly contradict them. Heritage Minister Amichai Eliyahu, for example, stated that the Israeli government is "racing ahead for Gaza to be wiped out," and that "all of Gaza will be Jewish."

Such statements, and others from Israeli officials that amount to calls for collective punishment, do not reflect our Jewish or Zionist values. We condemn these words in the strongest possible terms.

The collective punishment of civilians in Gaza will not bring "total victory" to Israel. It cannot be justified by Jewish ethics or international law. We are further anguished by the continued captivity of 50 hostages, of whom 20 are still believed to be alive, whose lives grow more endangered every day, in Gaza.

**In the short term, we urge the Israeli government to:**

- Work with international partners to ensure the sustained and safe delivery of humanitarian aid.
- Immediately work to end the violence and shootings at food distribution centres, in coordination and partnership with international partners.
- Open a significant number of food distribution points throughout Gaza.
- Allow large-scale entry of infant formula, ensuring safe delivery to medical centres and international aid facilities.
- Authorize the establishment of field hospitals and clinics.
- Facilitate the immediate entry of medical supplies and medications, especially in areas without functioning hospitals.

**In the long term, we support and call for:**

- A comprehensive humanitarian strategy that includes the establishment of a stable Palestinian governing alternative to Hamas, in coordination with regional and international partners.
- The rebuilding of Gaza's infrastructure and life-sustaining systems, to reduce dependence on temporary aid and restore dignity and stability to civilian life.

To realize both the immediate and long-term solutions, the war must end. We call on the Canadian government, as an ally of Israel and as a partner on the international stage, to work urgently toward a permanent ceasefire, the release of the hostages, and a surge in humanitarian aid.

Our Jewish values compel us to uphold our moral responsibilities to *all* people. We must not let our pain and trauma close our hearts to the pursuit of justice, peace, and *tikkun olam*—repairing the world.

Signed,

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