



December 4, 2023

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2
Justin.Trudeau@parl.gc.ca

The Honourable Mélanie Joly
Minister of Foreign Affairs of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6
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The Honourable Marc Miller
Minister of Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship Canada
House of Commons
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RE: Open Letter on Call for Permanent Ceasefire and Special Immigration Measures

Dear Prime Minister, Minister Joly, and Minister Miller,

New Democrats are writing to respectfully urge the government to immediately enact special immigration measures to facilitate the evacuation and reunification of extended family members of Canadian citizens and permanent residents from Gaza.

Today, more than two million innocent lives remain trapped in Israel’s siege of Gaza, trying to survive amid the most unbearable and inhumane conditions. After weeks of intense bombardment, thousands have been killed, many of whom were children. At time of writing this letter, a temporary humanitarian pause was being respected. Distressingly, that has now ended. Already hundreds more, mostly children and women, have been added to the death toll. Executive Director of UNICEF, Catherine Russell, said “the Gaza strip is once again the most dangerous place in the world to be a child.” The United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights is urging “...all parties and states with influence over them to redouble efforts, immediately, to ensure a ceasefire – on humanitarian and human rights grounds.” It is imperative that Canada add our voice in calling for a permanent ceasefire.

The latest reports indicate that 1.8 million Palestinians are displaced from their homes in Gaza in their own ancestral homeland. Among them are people with disabilities, children, seniors, and beloved family members of hundreds of Canadian citizens and residents.

The daily distress that Canadians with loved ones in Gaza have endured in the past eight weeks is beyond comprehension, especially during communications blackouts imposed on the people of Gaza. They are constantly worrying about the imminent threat to the health, safety, and lives of their families. Despite the magnitude of the crisis in Gaza, the Canadian government has not responded with proportionally vigorous humanitarian measures.

While we are pleased that the Government has responded to New Democrats' call to automatically renew expiring visas for Palestinians who are already in Canada and to expedite the processing of those with existing applications, more needs to be done.

The NDP joins a coalition of Palestinian families and community groups in Canada along with civil society organizations, labour, and other concerned citizens in urging the Liberal government to create special immigration measures so that Palestinians can reunite with both their immediate and extended family members in Canada. As the devastation continues, it is critical that the definition of family be expanded to include parents, grandparents, children and grandchildren regardless of age, and siblings, nieces and nephews.

Canada is recognized for its historical leadership in the international community when responding to humanitarian crises around the world. It has demonstrated that it has the capacity to take swift action to provide support to Ukrainians with temporary and permanent immigration pathways. This has been noted and appreciated by many Canadians. The standard that the Government has set with its special immigration measures in the war in Ukraine should be the norm and not the exception.

Currently, the Government of Australia has enacted special immigration measures including a special visa program to prioritize visa assessment for those seeking to depart Gaza. Canada should follow the leadership of its allies in this respect.

At the Standing Committee for Immigration, Refugees and Citizenship, when asked by the NDP, the Immigration Minister stated that he would ask his department to be as flexible as they can with the definition of family members for the purpose of facilitating evacuations from Gaza. It is imperative this is operationalized as a government policy.

Given that every minute counts in this urgent crisis, we ask that the Federal government take immediate action to:

- Bring in special immigration measures to reunite family members of those in Canada who have been directly affected by the conflict;
- Expand the criteria for assisted departure from Gaza to allow extended family members to be evacuated to safety in Canada;

- Expedite the processing of existing applications with IRCC on an exceptional basis given the extremely dire circumstances;
- Facilitate biometric scanning procedures in a safe third country, permit this processing to take place in Canada, or temporarily waive the requirement for biometric scanning given the absence of infrastructure and bureaucracy required to complete this process within Gaza; and
- Consider waiving certain regulations on a temporary basis in light of extraordinary circumstances that make it especially challenging to meet these requirements.

Thank you for your prompt attention to this urgent matter.

Respectfully,



Jagmeet Singh, MP
Burnaby South



Jenny Kwan, MP
Vancouver East



Charlie Angus, MP
Timmins – James Bay



Niki Ashton, MP
Churchill – Keewatinook Aski



Taylor Bachrach, MP
Skeena – Bulkley Valley



Lisa Marie Barron, MP
Nanaimo – Ladysmith



Daniel Blaikie, MP
Elmwood – Transcona



Rachel Blaney, MP
North Island – Powell River



Alexandre Boulerice, MP
Rosemont – La-Petite-Patrie




Richard Cannings, MP
South Okanagan – West Kootenay



Laurel Collins, MP
Victoria



Don Davies, MP
Vancouver Kingsway



Blake Desjarlais, MP
Edmonton Griesbach



Randall Garrison, MP
Esquimalt – Saanich – Sooke



Leah Gazan, MP
Winnipeg Centre



Matthew Green, MP
Hamilton Centre



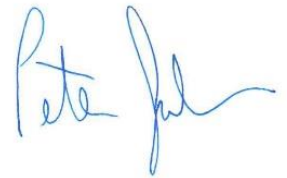
Carol Hughes, MP
Algoma – Manitoulin - Kapuskasing



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Gord Johns, MP
Courtenay – Alberni



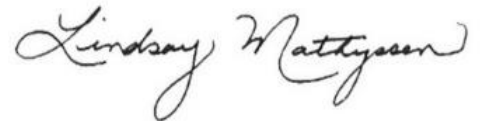
Peter Julian, MP
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Brian Masse, MP
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