



## Palestine House

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Rally Asks Ottawa to Take Firm Stand, Hold Israel Accountable for War Crimes

TORONTO, 9 January 2009 - A broad coalition of civil society organizations, labour unions and faith groups are organizing a mass rally Saturday, 10 January 2009, at 11:00 am outside the Israeli Consulate to protest ongoing Israeli war crimes in the Gaza Strip.

Dr. Farid Ayad, President of Palestine House, said: "It is hard to believe that instead of working for a lasting solution in the region, the Canadian government's spokespeople, most notably Peter Kent and Lawrence Canon, have been blaming Palestinians for this unprecedented Israeli assault on every facet of life in Gaza."

Dr. Ayad adds, "Only after the crisis in Gaza reached catastrophic proportions did Ottawa begin calling for a 'ceasefire' and pledged \$4-million in aid. This is a step in the right direction, but it is also too little and too late for the thousands of Palestinian families who've had relatives maimed or killed in the past two weeks. Canada has to cut relations with Israel instead of supporting an apartheid regime that denies the fundamental rights of all Palestinians in the region."

The International Committee for the Red Cross, the UN's Relief Works Agency, the World Bank and the World Health Organization, among others have all documented the magnitude of Israeli violations of international law in this and other incidents. This includes, Israel's shelling of the United Nations Al Fahoura girl's school in the Jabaliya refugee camp in Northern Gaza that killed at least 30 Palestinians seeking refuge; and on Thursday Israel opened fire on aid-convoys killing one UN relief worker and injuring several others.

Israeli attacks have killed over 770 Palestinians, including over 200 Palestinian children, and injured over 3,100, mostly civilians. Many of the injured have been maimed for life. "These are crimes against humanity and the Canadian government must act to stop them" said Khaled Mouammar, President of the Canadian Arab Federation.

Organizers of the rally are calling on the Canadian government to demand a UN investigation into war crimes and crimes against humanity committed by Israel. As Mouammar explains: "The Canadian government cannot remain silent any longer. We hope that the Canadian Parliament will review its free trade and security cooperation agreements with Israel, sanction Israeli officials implicated in war-crimes in accordance with Canadian law, and impose an embargo on existing and pending military and arms deals between Canada and Israel."

Rallies in support of Palestine are being organized in cities across Canada this weekend.

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