

# Jonathan Wilkinson

NORTH VANCOUVER'S MEMBER OF PARLIAMENT



February 21, 2024

## Reflections on the tragedy of Gaza

The ongoing humanitarian situation in Gaza is increasingly desperate and heartbreaking. Thousands of innocent civilians - including children - have died. The scale of destruction is enormous.

The violence that began October 7th with the brutal attack by Hamas-led terrorists on Israeli civilians has become a sustained air and ground offensive by Israel targeting Gaza - at a cost of close to 30,000 lives thus far.

As a human being, I grieve every Israeli and Palestinian innocent life that has been lost in this conflict. I share with most Canadians an overwhelming mixture of shock, horror and revulsion.

Those feelings have been echoed and amplified in hundreds of passionate emails and phone calls from constituents to my North Vancouver office.

**“As a human being, I grieve every Israeli and Palestinian innocent life that has been lost in this conflict. I share with most Canadians an overwhelming mixture of shock, horror and revulsion.”**

### Intense passion

This conflict has divided opinion in much of the world and Canadians are no exception. Passions have been running high in Canada - with rising antisemitism and Islamophobia being raised by many as a major and malevolent concern.

It is critically important at this time that we remind ourselves who we truly are as Canadians.

This is a country that Canadians have built on a foundation of tolerance and diversity. Ours is a country that has in the past, and must in the future, find pathways for dialogue towards solutions that work for all. We cannot allow Canada to become a terrain on which conflicts in other parts of the world are fought.

This was reinforced to me last weekend by a North Shore Taxi driver on the way to YVR. The last thing we need, he said, is for us to uncritically import conflicts of other regions to Canada.

Canada must be better than that. We must strive to be an example of how people of different backgrounds and different faiths find ways to not only live together but discover pathways to constructive and fruitful dialogue.

Moreover, we can never tolerate a situation where members of the Jewish or Muslim communities in Canada fear for their safety because of the situation in the Middle East.

A responsible federal government must seek to lead Canadians through this conflict – and through the pain and emotion associated with the loss of life – in a way that seeks to bring citizens together.

### International law must prevail

Canada must base its engagement in these matters on a very Canadian respect for international humanitarian law.

Canada has unequivocally condemned Hamas' attacks of October 7 - the appalling loss of life, and the reprehensible acts of violence perpetrated in those attacks. We have and will continue to condemn Hamas' unacceptable treatment of hostages and we will continue to call for and work towards the immediate and unconditional release of all remaining hostages.

We must also be very clear that Israel must respect international humanitarian law. Civilians and civilian infrastructure must be protected.

Indications from Israel that it is planning a ground offensive into the southern Gaza city of Rafah are gravely concerning. About 1.5 million Palestinians are taking refuge in the area. The impacts on civilians from an expanded military operation would be catastrophic. There is simply nowhere else for civilians to go. Canada is part of a growing international consensus urging the Israeli government not to go down this path.

The need for humanitarian assistance in Gaza has never been greater. Rapid, safe and unimpeded humanitarian relief must be provided to civilians. The International Court of Justice has been clear: Israel must ensure the delivery of basic services and essential humanitarian assistance and must protect civilians. The

price of defeating Hamas cannot be the continuous suffering of all Palestinian civilians.

### Sustainable ceasefire

Though Canada is but a middle power in the world, our federal government has been pushing actively for and will continue to push for a sustainable ceasefire.

This must involve parties on all sides taking a step back. No ceasefire can be one sided. Hamas must lay down its arms and release all hostages immediately. Israel must be willing to engage in conversations to end the suffering and to begin a process for addressing long term peace and stability.

**“Though Canada is but a middle power in the world, our federal government has been pushing actively for and will continue to push for a sustainable ceasefire.”**

Canada supports Palestinians' right to self-determination. We have historically been committed and we remain committed to working with partners toward a just and enduring peace in the form of a two-state solution, wherein Israelis and Palestinians can live securely within internationally recognised borders.

### Careful reflection of all perspectives

I recognize the pain and the anguish wracking so many in our community as we witness what continues to unfold in the Middle East. I am not immune to those feelings.

I would suggest, though, that we all try to find the space and the courage to carefully reflect on the perspectives of all sides in this extremely complex conflict.

Canada must play a constructive and helpful role internationally to find both short- and long-term solutions to this tragedy.

As your MP, I am deeply committed to doing all I can personally to ensure that Canada is a thoughtful and constructive partner in advancing goals that we all, as human beings, and we all, as Canadians, ascribe to.

Contact us: **Constituency Office 604-775-6333**

Email: [Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca](mailto:Jonathan.Wilkinson@parl.gc.ca) | Website: [JonathanWilkinson.libparl.ca](http://JonathanWilkinson.libparl.ca)