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Many people have reached out to me about the increasingly dire situation unfolding in Israel and Gaza. This has horrified us all. I want to thank everyone for all their urgent and heartfelt messages.

The terrorist attack by Hamas against Israeli citizens on October 7th was brutal beyond words, and let's be clear, I unequivocally condemn this act. Now, Gaza is being pounded with bombs daily in response, aiming to destroy Hamas as an organization, but causing thousands of deaths and untold suffering of Palestinian civilians in the process.

Though this conflict is far away, in homes across this country, Canadians are feeling traumatized, divided, and helpless as we watch with disbelief.

So what do we do? What can we say to help?

From what I have heard and read from you all, I think most of us can agree on some key actions that reflect fundamental Canadian values. The immediate priority must be on protecting the lives of Israeli and Palestinian civilians. Palestinian people in Gaza urgently need access to aid. Israeli hostages held by Hamas must be freed. And Canadian citizens who want to leave the area must be assisted to do so.

As stated by the Prime Minister, "we're engaged closely with our allies and trying to build humanitarian corridors, get aid in, get civilians, foreign nationals out of Gaza. There's a lot of conversations going on right now about the need [for] humanitarian pauses and that is something that Canada supports."

While the Israeli Defence Forces (IDF) are aiming at Hamas infrastructure and personnel, and trying to warn civilians ahead of time, those intentions ring hollow when civilians—families, children, grandparents—get caught in the crossfire. As a doctor, I am appalled with the images of hospitals damaged and overwhelmed in the conflict area, while hearing about the conditions faced by health care workers, and the death toll that rises every hour.

International law and norms allow Israel a right to respond. At the same time, these laws demand that efforts must be taken to protect civilians and provide humanitarian aid and access to the conflict zone. We must recognize, however, that these laws were developed

before this era of terrorist organizations like Hamas, who are committed to violence, embed themselves amidst civilian populations and are extremely difficult to negotiate with. Such are the dreadful intricacies of a complex and long simmering conflict.

Many of you who have written to me are asking for a ceasefire to allow those suffering in Gaza to get the relief and aid that they desperately need. I strongly agree with goal of what people are asking for: simply to stop the bombing so that civilians can get help now: water, food, fuel, and other essentials, as well as relief for exhausted medical personnel.

While Israel may be concerned that some aid will be diverted to Hamas, inadvertently strengthening their position and undermining their efforts to defeat Hamas, we have to alleviate the suffering of innocent men, women, and children.

Canada has not only committed aid to Gaza but has expanded it to \$50 million for humanitarian efforts. We remain engaged with regional partners, including Egypt and Jordan, to support further humanitarian access and the return of hostages taken by Hamas. Canada has also joined others in requesting that a humanitarian pause in hostilities be allowed for aid to flow and alleviate the humanitarian crisis and help the civilians suffering. This is a call that I strongly support, and that is also supported by the international community including Ireland, the Netherlands, the United States and the United Nations.

As we consider Canada's, and our allies' role, we must embrace humanitarian principles, while preventing the war from escalating to other parts of the region and setting conditions where we may once and for all see a long-term peace which can truly assure the safety of Palestinian and Israeli people.

I still believe that a two-state solution can be reached, and perhaps collectively we will, when we move past this conflict, find a way to make this happen. I will continue to support urgent and thoughtful discussions as to what role Canada, as a middle power, can and should play in achieving this goal.

I don't believe that there are any easy solutions to this war and there is no simple statement that will assuage the anxiety and pain we feel as we watch what is happening in Israel and Gaza.

In such a troubling time, thank you for staying informed and using your voice to stand up against such a desperate situation. While the issues in Israel and Gaza feel very personal to many of us, we must find a way to navigate these complex and emotional issues in a respectful way that allows all of us to feel safe here at home.

I will continue to ensure that the voice of the many Yukoners pleading for the cessation of hostilities is heard. As a strong and informed community let us keep working together to support each other for the sake of Palestinian and Israeli citizens alike, until the long-denied peace in the region is finally achieved.