



Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association

A local of the BC Teachers' Federation

December 22, 2023

The Right Honorable Justin Trudeau, P.C., B. A., B.Ed.
Prime Minister of Canada
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister,

We write to you as our Prime Minister and as a teacher, a former colleague, and a former member of our association. Yesterday afternoon, after considerable debate, the Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association, through its Staff Representative Council, unanimously passed the following motion:

Whereas antisemitism is real, is vile, is harmful to our members, our students, their families and society at large, and we condemn it universally no matter where or how severely it appears;

And Whereas antisemitism is on the rise in Canada along with Islamophobia under the current circumstances;

And Whereas the death toll in Israel and Gaza has reached over 10,000 people of whom about half are children;

THAT the VSTA, through its Council, call on all levels of government to demand an immediate ceasefire by Israel and Hamas, a return of all hostages, and a lasting peace.

This motion reflects the despair our members feel when standing before our students at a loss to explain why the adults in positions of power on both sides of the conflict can find no better way to resolve the differences in their world views than to inflict death and deprivation on the citizens of the other side.

While we are encouraged by Canada's recent vote at the UN calling for an immediate humanitarian ceasefire, teachers remain challenged to explain why our government, and the governments of our allies and other democracies, cannot adopt a stronger position in support of saving innocent lives and freeing all those unjustly detained.

Compounding the stress resulting from the significant other challenges presently facing humanity, teachers fear that the exposure to the violence depicted in mainstream and social media reports related to this conflict is inflicting emotional harm on our students.



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Our motion was written and moved by, Omar Kassis, a teacher whose family left Palestine after the first Arab-Israeli War. Our hope is that you can derive inspiration from the unanimous vote in favour of this motion conducted by your former association to advocate more stridently on the world stage for a cessation of hostilities, freeing of hostages, and a just and lasting peace.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Terry Stanway".

Terry Stanway
President, Vancouver Secondary Teachers' Association