



The Canadian Press

Thursday, August 3, 2006

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Toronto, Ontario, Aug.03 /CCNMatthews/ - In a letter sent yesterday to Prime Minister Stephen Harper, The United Church of Canada is urging the Canadian government to call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties involved in the Middle East conflict.

"We deeply mourn the tragic loss of Lebanese, Israeli, and Palestinian lives, and lament the destruction and devastation that has caused the displacement of hundreds of thousands of people," writes the Rev. Dr. Jim Sinclair, General Secretary of the General Council.

"The long-standing issues that have created conflict and division in the region cannot be resolved militarily. On the contrary, violence will only lead to further suffering and deepening anger on both sides," says Sinclair in the letter.

Sinclair explains that, "together with Canada, the United Nations, and our partners, The United Church of Canada fully supports a two-state solution as the mechanism to resolve the Israeli-Palestinian issue, and has consistently urged all parties to engage in meaningful dialogue and negotiation as the means to ensuring just and peaceful resolutions of the core concerns that form the basis of the conflict. Negotiations under international supervision, international presence, consequences for failure to respect Security Council resolutions, and strong support for ending acts of terror and victimization of civilians on both sides are the way forward."

Sinclair says that for three decades, The United Church of Canada has worked on an ecumenical basis in partnership and solidarity with non-governmental organizations in the region, united in a common commitment to justice and peace. Over the years, he adds, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) has supported this work.

The United Church is therefore now asking the Canadian government to

\* call for an immediate ceasefire by all parties to the conflict, and insist on respect for international law

\* provide a fair share contribution to the humanitarian relief and long-term support that will be

required to meet the needs of those affected by the conflict

\* work with others in the international community in diplomatic efforts to bring about a sustainable, negotiated resolution to long-standing issues that form the basis of the conflict, and ensure a long-lasting peace

- END RELEASE - 03/08/2006

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COMPANY: The United Church of Canada

PROVINCE/STATE: ON

INDUSTRY: INTERNATIONAL POLITICS **RELIGION**

RELEASE ID: 200608030005

Press release distributed by CCNMatthews 1-866-736-3779

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**Uniform subject(s):** Religion, philosophy and ethics

**Hour of publication:** 15:0

**Length:** Medium, 374 words

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Doc. : news·20060803·CP·0928

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