

# Christmas 2006 Message to the Prime Minister of Canada

From: Hanna Kawas, a Bethlehemite and a descendant of the First Christians

December 25, 2006

Mr. Stephen Harper

I am a Christian Palestinian who, like the rest of my people, has been denied by your friends in Israel for the past thirty-nine years to go back home and live in my hometown Bethlehem (where we still have our own property).

My family, relatives, friends and the whole population of Bethlehem are enduring the most repressive and discriminatory regime the town has ever experienced and that includes the hated Roman (western) occupation of the city 2000 years ago.

A 25 ft. high concrete wall, in addition to the military check points, are putting the population of the city behind an iron curtain and rendering the city an open prison, similar to what successive Israeli governments have done to the rest of the Palestinian villages, towns and cities.

Unemployment in Bethlehem is over sixty-five percent.

Between the years 2000 and 2004, 357 Christian Palestinian families (10 per cent of the Christian population) emigrated from Bethlehem alone, due to the Israeli economic and repressive military measures.

Freedom of movement, freedom of association, freedom to work and freedom to worship are all curbed by the thirty-nine years of Israeli occupation.

Theft of the land from Bethlehem and its adjacent towns and villages has been taking place at an increasing pace.

All this and more about the desperate situation of the Palestinian people can be learned and obtained from your representatives in Israel and is wildly available on the Internet.

Mr. Harper:

I am writing to you to make you aware of all these facts. I thought you might not know all this information, and you might open your heart and mind to the suffering of my people. So you will not say in the future that you did not know.

Your unconditional support for Israeli occupation, apartheid and war crimes is "ultimately genocidal" (to borrow your phrase).<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/RTGAM.20061221.wxharper21/BNStory/National/>

Israeli occupation and repression of the Palestinian nation and people is genocidal. The Israeli war against Lebanon last summer, the dropping of four million cluster bomblets and your support for that war is all also genocidal.

The Prime Minister of Israel was quoted recently as saying:

"One of the best friends in Canada is also the Prime Minister of Canada, Mr. Harper. Canada has been absolutely incredible, friendly and supportive to us since the first day that Mr. Harper took over as Prime Minister. And I request, I ask, on behalf of my government, Gerry (Schwartz), that when you will talk to the Prime Minister of Canada, tell him that we thank him for his friendship, and that we thank Canada for its support, for the soldiers of Israel, for the fighters of Israel and for the people of Israel," (<http://www.pmo.gov.il/PMOEng/Communication/PMSpeaks/speechheseg211106.htm>)

The first believers in Jesus Christ, his people, his descendents and the guardians of the holy places are not celebrating his birthday this year. They are starving, thanks to yours and George Bush's support for their oppressors and cutting Canadian and U.S. aid to the besieged Palestinian people and nation. Even President Jimmy Carter called your action "a crime."

Mr Harper:

On this Christmas day, I, in good conscience, cannot wish you a merry Christmas, while you are in solidarity with the people who are trying to ethnically cleanse the Holy Land of the descendants of the first Christians. Since you and Mr. Bush claim to be Christians, I would like to remind both of you and your rich friends all over the world with the following quote from the Bible.

"It is easier for a camel to pass through the eye of a needle than for a rich man to enter the kingdom of God" (Matthew 19:24).

Yours truly,  
Hanna Kawas

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