

In partial response, let me speak plainly. Human rights violations such as we have witnessed in the West Bank and Gaza, in these past agonizing weeks, are totally unacceptable, and in many cases are illegal under international law. The use of live ammunition to restore civilian order, the withholding of food supplies to control and collectively penalize civilian populations, the use of tear gas to intimidate families in their homes, of beatings to maim so as to neutralize youngsters and preempt further demonstrations, have all been witnessed these past months. UN officials, Red Cross observers, international teams of doctors and lawyers, to say nothing of the media, report that these actions almost certainly are deliberate instruments of the so-called "iron-fist" policy, designed to re-establish control by force and by fear. These actions appear part of a logic of containment pre-dating recent disturbances. Too often it has manifested itself through breaches of the rule of law, including administrative detentions, officially sanctioned recourse to what is called "moderate physical pressure" on detainees, and a policy of settlements in the occupied territories, contrary to international law.

Such acts, no matter the historical context or provocation, are shocking to Canadians - as indeed they are to so many Israelis, who have been dismayed and distressed by images of their citizens - soldiers implicated in events that, before the Palestinian uprising began, many would have said were unthinkable. Those acts have been denounced, including in this country by an all-party delegation of the House of Commons Standing Committee on External Affairs and International Trade which last month was in Israel and the territories. As I reflect on these actions, I have no doubt but that they have deeply pained the vast majority of the CIC membership as indeed they have many other Canadians.

There have been suggestions that events reported by the media were "myths" based on a few instances only of breakdown in discipline. Certainly the lack of adequate training for maintaining civil order and the youthfulness of some of the Israeli troops have combined to worsen the situation. But here surely, we have to face some inescapable facts. I am not unsympathetic to the views of many friends of Israel, who regard media reporting of recent events as unfair "snapshots" of a complex issue, the history of which is all too easily overlooked in these times of turmoil. Yet here, surely, the painful incidents are vividly before us every evening on television. Unhappily, they are not fabrications, to be addressed through greater media control.

Your Government of Canada is mindful of the plight of Israel, of its legitimate security needs, of its fears, engendered by the hostility and past aggression of its neighbours, of the conundrum it faces in the occupied