

May 22, 2008

Prime Minister Stephen Harper
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa K1A 0A2

Dear Mr. Prime Minister,

Greetings in the Name of Jesus Christ, the Prince of Peace!

I write to you today both as the President of The Canadian Council of Churches and at the behest of the Council which is one of the broadest Christian bodies in the world, representing 21 denominations from the Anglican, Roman Catholic, Protestant, Evangelical, Free Church and Eastern and Oriental Orthodox traditions, representing in its member denominations 85% of the Christians in Canada.

My letter comes to you as a request which manifests the witness of Scripture requiring us all "...to do justice, and to love kindness, and to walk humbly with [our] God." (Micah 6:8b). It is time, Mr. Prime Minister, it is well past time, to recognize the Ukrainian Famine, the Holodomor, as the genocide that it was.

The year 2007 marked the 75th anniversary of the Ukrainian Famine, the Holodomor of 1932-3, deliberately and artificially perpetrated by the Stalinist regime and resulting in one of the greatest losses of human life in a single country in the 20th century. As many as 10 million Ukrainians starved to death and this act of genocide was neither acknowledged internationally at the time, nor were its perpetrators punished. It remains insufficiently known to this day though the country of Australia has just recently, in April of this year, passed a motion to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide.

The Governing Board of The Canadian Council of Churches met in Ottawa last week. During that week in which we requested a meeting with you and were given time with David Anderson, we witnessed a presentation about the Ukrainian Famine which moved the Board to unanimously request the Prime Minister and Government of Canada to declare the Holodomor a genocide. The details of the horrific crime fit the detailed definition of genocide as it is given in the 1948 UN Convention of the prevention of the crime of genocide. We remind you too that the nation of Australia has already led the way in declaring the Ukrainian Famine a genocide. These two facts combined with the up-coming visit of Ukrainian President Viktor Yushchenko next week all

point to the absolute necessary of doing all that can be done to right what has been and still is in its non-recognition, the shameful crime of artificially imposed starvation.

I understand there is some movement already underway to recognize the Holodomor as a genocide and I assure you that such recognition would be very well received by the 21 denominations of The Canadian Council of Churches.

I draw to your attention too, Mr. Prime Minister, the April 21, 2004 recognition of the Armenian genocide by Canada, the membership of the Armenian Orthodox tradition in The Canadian Council of Churches and the enthusiasm of that tradition for this recognition of the genocide of their Ukrainian sisters and brothers.

Next week's visit by President Viktor Yuschenko would provide the perfect opportunity for Canada to proclaim to the world the motto used to commemorate the 75th Anniversary of the Famine, "Ukraine Remembers. The World Acknowledges."

I look forward to the announcement and I remain,

Yours in Christ,

The Rev. Dr. James Christie
President
The Canadian Council of Churches