

NEWS RELEASE

For Immediate Release
Wednesday, September 10, 2025

Coast Salish to Palestine

Canadian Writers Condemn Israel's Murder of 244 Palestinian Journalists

As the Israeli Occupying Forces' genocide in Occupied Palestine continues, 244 Canadian writers have signed an open letter condemning the Israeli occupation state's killing of [244 Palestinian journalists](#). The signatories denounce these killings as war crimes.

[The letter reads:](#)

We stand with Palestinian journalists, the bravest on the planet.

We condemn their killings by the Israeli state as war crimes.

Each paid with their life, for another to have the truth.

Our names bear witness to theirs.

Acclaimed writers Omar El Akkad, Tanya Talaga, David Chariandy, Carmen Aguirre, Waubgeshig Rice, Ivan Coyote, J.B. MacKinnon, and Vivek Shraya have signed the letter alongside dozens of other published writers who have shaped Canada's literary landscape.

"Almost every single day, Palestinian reporters are executed for the crime of doing their jobs," says El Akkad.

A former Giller Prize winner, El Akkad's most recent book *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*, examines the West's response to Apartheid Israel's offensive in Gaza.

"The complete and utter silence of so many of our journalistic, literary and cultural institutions in the face of this horror is something that won't be forgotten. Against that silence, the absolute least we can do as writers is stand in support of the bravest journalists on the planet."

The letter is a collaborative effort between writers Yasuko Thanh and Garth Martens, undertaken in consultation with the Palestinian-led solidarity group **Coast Salish to Palestine**. Over four days, from September 3 to September 6, the campaign reached its symbolic goal of 244 names, one for each journalist killed.

"Journalist Mohammed Mansur was killed in an airstrike in Khan Yunis. That same day, his colleague Hossam Shabat, writing Mansur's obituary in Beit Hanoun, was also murdered," said Yasuko Thanh, novelist and co-organizer of the open letter.

"Shabat had prepared his own statement: 'If you are reading this, it means I have been killed. Keep fighting, keep telling our stories—until Palestine is free.' These words are a call to action."

When Marie Wilson, one of three commissioners of Canada's Truth and Reconciliation Commission, added her name to the letter, the significance was not lost on Thanh.

“Whether in Palestine or on Turtle Island, genocide serves the same purpose: to advance settler colonial control.”

Coast Salish to Palestine adds: “The world is watching. Some are watching in horror and helplessness. Some are watching in anger. Some are horrified, angry, but they are also determined to do something about it. They understand that it’s not just Palestinians they are attempting to save, but also their own souls, and their children’s.”

The initiative arose after efforts to secure public statements from Canadian literary institutions were denied. The **BC and Yukon Book Prize Board** failed to reach consensus on whether to acknowledge the killings as war crimes and genocide. At the **University of Victoria’s Department of Writing**, internal protocols and union rules were cited as barriers to even circulating the request.

Garth Martens, poet and Governor General’s Award finalist, mobilized fellow writers to sign and circulate the letter. “The response was heartening and a little overwhelming, as the letter moved like wildfire through our community,” Martens said. “I call on Canada to support international investigations into Israel’s extensive list of war crimes and to boycott, sanction, and divest from the Israel occupation state.”

Coast Salish to Palestine puts it this way: “Discourse is a battlefield. Settler states systematically silence Indigenous voices. As Naji al-Ali, one of the essential architects of Palestinian political consciousness, said: *Whoever wants to write for Palestine, and whoever wants to draw for Palestine, must know themselves: dead.*”

Signatories include a broad spectrum of acclaimed Canadian writers, such as:

- **Omar El Akkad**
- **Waubgeshig Rice**
- **Yves Engler**
- **Tanya Talaga**
- **Carmen Aguirre**
- **J.B. MacKinnon**
- **David Chariandy**
- **Karen Solie**
- **Lorna Crozier**
- **Shyam Selvadurai**
- **Anakana Schofield**
- **Fred Wah**
- **Ivan Coyote**
- **Susan Musgrave**
- **André Alexis**
- **Carol Rose GoldenEagle**
- **Lynn Coady**
- **Don Gillmor**
- **Ayelet Tsabari**
- **Bill Gaston**
- **Gary Geddes**
- **Vivek Shraya**
- **Sonnet L’Abbé**
- **Patrick Friesen**
- **John Barton**
- **Endre Farkas**
- **Shaena Lambert**
- **Trevor Ferguson**
- **Will Aitken**
- **Grant Buday**
- **Janika Oza**
- **Zilla Jones**
- **Iryn Tushabe**
- **Chimwemwe Undi**
- **katherena vermette**
- **Marie Wilson**

Quotes

Coast Salish to Palestine, Palestinian-led Advocacy Group –

“What is happening in Palestine has been happening for the past 500 years: the doctrine of discovery, the myth of a ‘land without a people for a people without a land’, the demotion of God, our Creator, to the role of concierge and real-estate agent of the rich and powerful. The state-sanctioned biological warfare, the campaigns of forced starvation, the destruction of entire villages, towns and ways of life: it has all happened before, right here, and people are now connecting the dots. They are realizing how this continuous project of Indigenous dispossession serves only those in power, not the common people, and they are realizing that saving Palestine from destruction saves all of us around the world from a similar fate, should we decide to stand up to injustice.”

Yasuko Thanh, novelist and co-organizer –

“In the absence of press freedom, ordinary people are putting on Press jackets and losing their lives to cover the genocide. When Hossam Shabat began reporting, he was only twenty-one, a college student. Journalists are protected under international law, yet in Occupied Gaza those protections are being flagrantly ignored.”

Garth Martens, poet and co-organizer –

“The loss of 244 Palestinian journalists, killed by Israel in the line of duty while reporting on atrocities against their people, is not just a tragedy — it’s a war crime. The names of our murdered colleagues in Occupied Palestine deserve to be known, remembered, and shouted until justice is served, until Israel’s genocide and occupation of Palestine end.”

Omar El Akkad, Novelist and Journalist, Author of *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This* –

“Almost every single day, Palestinian reporters are executed for the crime of doing their jobs. The complete and utter silence of so many of our journalistic, literary and cultural institutions in the face of this horror is something that won’t be forgotten. Against that silence, the absolute least we can do as writers is stand in support of the bravest journalists on the planet.”

Yves Engler, Writer and NDP Leadership Candidate –

“Canada has enabled Israel’s genocide in Occupied Gaza. Some of the blood of the courageous Palestinian journalists is on our government’s hands.”

David Chariandy, Novelist –

“The killing of journalists and all others who bear witness is the most shameful act of collective silencing. As both victim and perpetrator know equally, it is an assault upon truth itself. We cannot forget those who fell documenting the Palestinian struggle for life. We cannot abandon those who continue this bravest work today.”

Carmen Aguirre, author of *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter* –

“As a Chilean who arrived in Canada as a child refugee and whose family was deeply involved

in the solidarity movement with the resistance against the Pinochet dictatorship, I sign this letter in solidarity with Palestinian journalists who gave their lives for a cause bigger than themselves. Nothing and nobody is forgotten.”

Iryn Tushabe, Writer and Journalist –

“It’s heartbreaking to watch the news every day and see the escalation in Gaza and the West Bank. It’s infuriating to see respected media outlets repeat the blatant lies and baseless justifications delivered by Netanyahu and the Israeli army. How many more Palestinians must be assassinated? —how many journalists? —before Western news organizations push back against the machine censoring their coverage of Gaza?”

Quick Facts:

- As of September 1, 2025, at least **244 Palestinian journalists** have been killed by Apartheid Israel since the genocide in Occupied Palestine began, according to Shireen.ps, making it the deadliest period for the press in modern history. This number has since increased to **270 killed journalists**.
- Shireen.ps is an agency run by volunteers in Occupied Palestine that tracks the number of journalists murdered by Israel — named after Al Jazeera journalist Shireen Abu Akleh, who was shot and killed by Israeli forces in the occupied West Bank in 2022.
- The open letter received **244 writer signatories**, symbolizing one Canadian writer’s name for each journalist killed at the time of its drafting.
- The letter was initiated after two Canadian writers’ institutions declined to issue statements condemning the killings.
- The campaign was launched under direction from **Coast Salish to Palestine**, a grassroots, Palestinian-led solidarity group based on unceded Coast Salish territories. The group supports anti-colonial, anti-racist, and internationalist solidarity organizing in support of Palestinian liberation and justice.
- **Yasuko Thanh** is the author of four books, including *Mysterious Fragrance of the Yellow Mountains*, a tale of the resistance movement in colonial French Indochina, which won the Writers Trust Fiction Prize. She has written for *The Globe and Mail*, *The Walrus*, *Journalists for Human Rights*, and others.
- **Garth Martens** is the author of *Prologue for the Age of Consequence and Remediation*. Winner of the Bronwen Wallace Award, he was also a finalist for the Governor General’s Award for Poetry. His next book, *Who Else in the Dark Headed There*, is out in 2026.
- **Palestinian death toll in Occupied Gaza since October 7, 2023:** According to [Arena](#) and [Pearls and Irritations](#), the death toll is 680,000, as of April 2025. This includes 136,000 deaths from violence and 544,000 deaths from targeted deprivation. It includes 380,000 dead Palestinians under 5 years of age, and a total of 479,000 dead children. In July 2024, [The Lancet](#) estimated a minimum death toll of 186,000.
- The Israeli occupation state has created, in Gaza, the largest cohort of pediatric amputees in history, according to UNICEF.

Learn More:

To read the full open letter or to learn more about Coast Salish to Palestine, visit:

- [The Letter](#)
- [About Coast Salish to Palestine](#)

A backgrounder follows this press release.

Media Contacts

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Signatories available for interview

To contact any of the writers for interviews, email to request their contact information:

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- **Omar El Akkad**
Writer, Journalist, Author of *One Day, Everyone Will Have Always Been Against This*
 - Shortlisted for the 2025 Hilary Weston Writers' Trust Prize for Nonfiction
 - Winner of the 2021 Giller Prize
- **Marcello Di Cintio**
Non-fiction writer, Author of *Pay No Heed to the Rockets: Palestine in the Present Tense*
 - Winner of the Shaughnessy Cohen Prize for Political Writing
 - Former PEN Canada board member, resigned due to their response to Gaza.
- **Carmen Aguirre**
Playwright, Memoirist, author of *Something Fierce: Memoirs of a Revolutionary Daughter*
 - Winner of CBC's Canada Reads
 - *Something Fierce* is about her childhood in the Chilean resistance
- **Yves Engler**
 - Writer, Activist, NDP Leadership candidate
- **Rita Wong**, Poet, Activist
 - Winner of the Latner Griffin Writers' Trust Poetry Prize for her body of work
- **Arif Anwar**
Novelist, Academic, Author of *The Storm*
 - Used to work for BRAC, one of world's largest NGOs, on issues of poverty alleviation, and for UNICEF Myanmar for public health issues.