



3250 Bloor Street West, Suite 300  
Toronto, Ontario  
M8X 2Y4 Canada

416-231-5931 1-800-268-3781  
F: 416-231-3103  
www.united-church.ca

February 7, 2017

The Honourable Chrystia Freeland P.C.,  
Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa K1A 0A6

Dear Minister Freeland:

Warm greetings to you from The United Church of Canada General Council Offices in Toronto.

The United Church of Canada wishes you every success in your new role as Minister of Foreign Affairs, and looks forward to working with you. We believe Canada can and should make a valuable contribution to a more peaceful and prosperous world. To this end, I request an opportunity to meet with you to discuss how Canada can “intensify and accelerate its international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East”. Together with partners in the region, United Church members across the country are ready to support the federal government in this task.

I am writing today specifically regarding the Israeli Knesset approval yesterday of legislation that retroactively legalizes illegal Jewish outposts built on privately owned Palestinian land. The United Church of Canada believes the Israeli occupation of Palestinian land is a major contributor to the violence in the region. A just and negotiated end to the occupation on the basis of international law and UN resolutions is a necessary condition for peace. This conviction arises from the relationships that The United Church has maintained over the years in Israel and Palestine and from first-hand witness to the injustices of the occupation. This morning we received the statement of one United Church partner, B'Tselem, The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories regarding the action of the Knesset February 6, 2017:

*The law passed by the Knesset today proves yet again that Israel has no intention of ending its control over the Palestinians or its theft of their land. Lending a semblance of legality to this ongoing act of plunder is a disgrace for the state and its legislature. Passing the bill mere weeks after UN Security Council Resolution 2334 is a slap in the face of the international community. While enshrining the dispossession in law is a new development, in practice it is another facet of the massive land grab carried out openly for decades by declaring "state land".*

We welcome your Government’s commitment to restoring Canada’s international leadership in peacemaking and multilateralism. We urge the Canadian government to demonstrate this by publically denouncing the Knesset action as the flagrant violation of international law that it is.

This would reflect a Canadian commitment to United Nations Security Council Resolution 2334 which, among other things, calls on all member states to reaffirm *that the establishment by Israel of settlements in the Palestinian territory occupied since 1967, including East Jerusalem, has no legal validity and constitutes a flagrant violation under international law and a major obstacle to the achievement of the two-state solution and a just, lasting and comprehensive peace.*

We look forward to your response.

Grace and peace to you in the important leadership you give.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell  
Moderator/Moderatrice

Cc The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada  
The Honourable Peter Kent, Foreign Affairs Critic, Conservative Party of Canada  
Hélène Laverdière, Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party  
Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada  
Rhéal Fortin, Leader, Bloc Québécois