



February 10, 2016

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

Dear Minister Dion:

The United Church of Canada welcomes your government's stated commitment to restore Canadian leadership in the world, and your personal commitment to be an "honest broker" in the Middle East. Following on the letter, I wrote to welcome the Prime Minister to office, I am writing to urge your government to take important steps toward achieving a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

For many years the United Church has maintained significant relationships in Israel and Palestine, with people and organizations who continue to work towards a non-violent end to the conflict, even now during heightened tensions and outbreaks of violence. At its national meeting this past August, the church's General Council expressed concern for the safety and security of Israelis and Palestinians, and affirmed its support for self-determination by both peoples.

The church echoes Palestinian and Israeli partners who say, "Enough" to the violence and to 50 years of occupation, where young and old alike are weighed down by despair and discouraged by the lack of a viable peace process. We condemn violent acts such as the killing of both Palestinian and Israeli civilians, use of excessive force by Israeli police and army against protesters, extrajudicial killings, and collective punishment.

To actively support Canadians' desire to make a real and valuable contribution to a more just and peaceful world, The United Church of Canada requests that the Canadian government live out its stated policy on Israel and Palestine regarding the illegality of settlements; non-recognition of Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem; violations posed by the route of the separation barrier; and the importance of a negotiated resolution to the conflict.

Living out Canadian policy would mean: Canada votes in congruence with its policy on relevant UN resolutions; Canada engages from its policy in bilateral and multilateral relations; Canada speaks from its policy in public statements. All would require both Palestine and Israel to adhere to international law without exception including the cessation by Israel of the forcible transfers and home demolitions in East Jerusalem and Area C of the West Bank, which constitute clear threats to peace and clear violations of international law.

A priority of your government is the implementation of the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA). This agreement is due to come before parliament for ratification. Currently in Canada, because settlement products are not distinguishable from products made in Israel, they receive preferential tariff treatment under the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA). The illegal settlements are supported by an economic infrastructure that includes the export to Canada of products. These products should be

labelled accurately as made in the settlements, and therefore excluded from beneficial treatment under CIFTA .

Inaccurate and misleading labelling prevents Canadian consumers from making ethical choices about their purchases. We ask that the government introduce regulations for Canadian retailers that would require them to label goods from the settlements differently from products made in Israel. All twenty-eight countries in the European Union have introduced such guidelines and requirements, some of which are mandatory. These labelling regulations are also now being considered by other governments.

In conclusion, I request a meeting with you to discuss concrete ways in which we can collaborate for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. Together with partners in the region, United Church members across the country are ready to support the federal government's role as an honest broker for peace in the Palestine-Israeli conflict. Considering that the situation in Palestine and Israel is rapidly deteriorating after nearly 50 years of occupation, the need for Canada to act is urgent.

Regards,



Jordan Cantwell
Moderator,
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

cc:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister of International Trade
The Honourable Gerry Ritz, International Trade Critic, Conservative Party of Canada
The Honourable Tony Clement, Foreign Affairs Critic, Conservative Party of Canada
Don Davies, International Trade Critic, New Democratic Party
Hélène Laverdière, Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party
Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada
Rhéal Fortin, Leader, Bloc Québécois