

December 16, 2019

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., MP
Prime Minister of Canada
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0G2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I am writing on behalf of Mennonite Central Committee (MCC) Canada to voice our appreciation for your government's recent decision to vote in favour of the United Nations General Assembly Resolution 74/69 on November 19, 2019, supporting the right of the Palestinian people to self-determination. This is a welcome shift. The vote aligns with Canada's long-held official policy for the region, specifically Canada's condemnation of the occupation of the West Bank, Gaza and the Golan Heights, including the continued construction of illegal Israeli settlements.

Thank you for your government's important shift in this direction. We see this as a crucial step and encourage the government to continue to move forward. While welcoming this decision, we also urge the Canadian government to take further action to ensure all Canadian activities and practices in the region are consistent with Canada's official policy. This includes trade practices. The Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA) lacks any regulation to ensure goods produced or sourced from illegal Israeli settlements and industrial parks within Occupied Palestinian Territory (OPT) are either excluded or labelled as such. This lack of regulation allows companies to profit from the occupation of Palestinian territories. Allowing the benefits of CIFTA to extend to the Israeli settlements in the OPT is contrary to Canada's obligations to uphold international law and Canada's support for Palestinian self-determination.

MCC has been working with local partners in Palestine and Israel for 70 years, since 1949. MCC supports a wide variety of Israeli and Palestinian organizations committed to working non-violently towards a just peace for all in the region. Our local partners regularly note the daily and long-term harmful impacts of the encroaching military occupation, including rapidly expanding settlement development. Without the regulation of trade for goods produced in settlements, Canada's UN vote, while important, is only symbolic.

The Canadian government's recent UN vote is an encouraging step and sends a strong message. We are grateful for this change and want to thank the Canadian government for taking this stance. In moving forward, we urge the Canadian government to re-examine our trade and economic policies to ensure we are not directly or even inadvertently supporting illegal Israeli settlements. Such regulation would reaffirm Canada's international commitments, as well as Canada's official position

of supporting the human rights and thriving of all peoples in the region, both Palestinians and Israelis.

On behalf of MCC, I thank you once again for this decision, and encourage you to ensure all Canadian practices and activities are consistent with our policies and with international law. We assure you of our prayers as you lead our government on this and other key issues.

Sincerely,



Rick Cober Bauman
Executive Director
MCC Canada

CC:

Andrew Scheer, Conservative Party of Canada

Yves-François Blanchet, Bloc Québécois

Jagmeet Singh, New Democratic Party

Jo-Ann Roberts, Green Party of Canada

Chrystia Freeland, Deputy Prime Minister

François-Philippe Champagne, Minister of Foreign Affairs

Rob Oliphant, Parliamentary Secretary of Foreign Affairs

Mary Ng, Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade

Rachel Bendayan, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Small Business, Export Promotion and International Trade

Karina Gould, Minister of International Development

Erin O'Toole, CPC Critic for Foreign Affairs

Randy Hoback, CPC Critic for International Trade

Jack Harris, NDP Critic for Foreign Affairs

Daniel Blaikie, NDP Critic for Export Promotion & International Trade

Stephane Bergeron, Bloc Québécois Critic for Foreign Affairs

Simon-Pierre Savard-Tremblay, Bloc Québécois Critic for International Trade