

February 13, 2020

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 concerns over the recently announced U.S. Middle East Peace Plan. We ask the Canadian government to firmly and publicly reject the “Peace to Prosperity” plan as a viable solution to obtaining peace in the region. MCC believes that any plan for peace must be determined between Palestinians and Israelis, based on the right to self-determination, an end to the occupation, and rooted in international law. These principles are consistent with Canadian official policy concerning the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

MCC has worked in the Middle East for over 70 years, partnering with Palestinian and Israeli organizations that embrace nonviolent approaches to working for a just peace. Given our history in the region, we recognize that both peoples—Palestinians and Israelis—need to know they can live in a climate of peace and security without fear of violence. We hear from partners that this plan further limits possibilities for a just peace. Instead, the plan will entrench conditions, including occupation and annexation of land, that have contributed to ongoing conflict.

Any just peace must be determined between Palestinians and Israelis, working together. We are therefore additionally deeply concerned that the development of this plan did not include Palestinians. Sustainable peace cannot be negotiated without all relevant actors coming together.

Conflict resolution must also be rooted in international law. We are concerned with the flagrant disregard for this law, including the unilateral annexation of around 30 percent of the West Bank, along with all of Jerusalem. International law, beginning with the 1945 Charter of the United Nations and subsequent Security Council resolutions, prohibits the annexation of territory. The proposed plan also legalizes the 240 Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem. Settlements are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and are illegal under Canadian policy.

Palestinians refugees, in Gaza, in the West Bank, and in surrounding countries require ongoing support through UNWRA, and a solution that includes compensation for moral and material losses suffered through displacement, along with a continued affirmation of the right to return. Existing humanitarian crises in the region, especially in Gaza, must be addressed, but through the framework of ending the occupation, including the Israeli blockade of Gaza.

MCC is committed to the principle of a shared Jerusalem in which the spiritual and historical significance of the city is recognized for Christians, Muslims, and Jews. Indeed, we firmly believe all three religious groups should be able to worship and practice their faiths freely.

By rejecting this plan and insisting on a negotiated settlement between two parties based on international law, Canada can contribute to the conditions necessary for an actual just peace.

To this end, MCC urges Canada to support diplomatic efforts—including United Nations resolutions—that seek to uphold international law and protect the rights, well-being, and dignity of the region's peoples. On behalf of MCC, I assure you and your colleagues of our prayers as you give leadership to this important dimension of Canada's foreign policy.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Rick Cober Bauman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rick Cober Bauman
Executive Director
MCC Canada

CC:
The Honourable Chrystia Freeland
Deputy Prime Minister

The Honourable Francois-Phillippe Champagne
Minister of Foreign Affairs

Leona Alleslev
Official Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs Conservative Party of Canada

Jack Harris
Official Critic for Foreign Affairs New Democratic Party

Jo-Ann Roberts
Leader Green Party

Stephane Bergeron
Official Critic for Foreign Affairs Bloc Québécois