

May 15, 2020

The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.  
Minister for Foreign Affairs  
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**RE: Canada must uphold international law and condemn the government of Israel's annexation plans**

Dear Minister,

Greetings. We pray that you and your colleagues are well and safe in these challenging times.

We represent Christian denominations, church agencies, ecumenical organizations and networks who work with long-standing Palestinian and Israeli partners towards a just and lasting peace.

We write to you with great concern about Canada's silence regarding the plans of the current coalition government of Israel to propose a vote in the Knesset (likely July 1st) on annexing a significant part of the occupied Palestinian territories. These plans constitute a grave breach of Canadian and international law, specifically Article 147 of the IV Geneva Convention, prohibiting the appropriation of property. This silence of the Canadian government is puzzling in light of the recent vote at the UN affirming the Palestinian people's right to self-determination, Canada's policy position on Palestine-Israel, and its staunch support for the rule of law.

Palestinian partners rightfully question the inaction of the international community, stating, "Clear decisions are already taken by the UN. So why further waiting to apply what is already decided?" (Kairos Palestine). Israeli human rights organization B'Tselem is asking, "How can the rule of law have any meaning when it is determined, interpreted and applied in accordance with the interests of those who control and oppress their subjects with the intention of perpetuating their rule by means of this same "law"?" The Council of Patriarchs and Heads of Holy Land Churches urge the government of Israel to restrain from unilateral annexation plans which would surely bring about the loss of any remaining hope for the success of a peace process.

It is alarming that to date, Canada has remained silent on the threats of annexation made by the government of Israel, when on March 16th, you [stated with regard to Russian annexation of Crimea](#):

*"Today marks six years since Russia illegally annexed Crimea. Canada unequivocally condemns this violation of Ukraine's sovereignty and territorial integrity and of international law.*

*Canada and the international community will continue to keep up the pressure to compel Russia to respect Ukraine's sovereignty and international law."*

Furthermore, Canada's silence is in stark contrast to the European Union's position of April 23<sup>rd</sup>:

*The European Union's position on the status of the territories occupied by Israel in 1967 remains unchanged. In line with international law and relevant UN Security Council resolutions, including resolutions 242 (1967) and 338 (1973), the European Union does not recognise Israeli sovereignty over the occupied West Bank.*

*The European Union reiterates that any annexation would constitute a serious violation of international law. The European Union will continue to closely monitor the situation and its broader implications, and will act accordingly.*

Several European governments have spoken publicly against the government of Israel's plan to annex parts of occupied Palestinian territory, including Ireland and Norway who, like Canada, are running for two seats on the United Nations' Security Council.

In February 2020, you received a number of [letters from a variety of Canadian churches](#) and civil society organizations, urging the government to publicly denounce the United States administration's 'Peace and Prosperity Plan'. Your office stated that Canada would respond after having studied the plan. We are still waiting for Canada's response on this issue. Decades of ongoing occupation have seen numerous violations of Palestinian human rights allowed to continue without consequence. For example, Canada's non-recognition of Israel's illegal annexation of the Golan Heights carried no consequences. Instead, impunity appears to be winning the day while violations of international law continue unchecked.

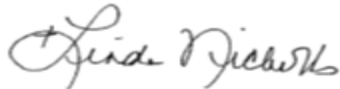
We call on the government of Canada to:

- publicly condemn the plans of the government of Israel to annex any and all parts of occupied Palestinian territory;
- publicly denounce the United States administration's "Peace and Prosperity Plan", which explicitly supports this illegal annexation plan;
- work with the European Union and like-minded allies to take all diplomatic and political actions available to hold the government of Israel accountable for violations of international law, including annexation of any and all parts of the occupied Palestinian territories;
- take all diplomatic and political actions available to enforce the rule of law without exception regarding violations of international law; and
- protect the human rights of Palestinians, including their right to self-determination, and to resist occupation and annexation.

The choice is to acquiesce in the face of significant, sustained human rights violations, or to join with those who condemn and work to end those violations. Our choices define us as people and nations. It is our prayer that Canada will choose to be a nation that does not remain silent in the face of illegal actions, but will work alongside other nations to uphold human rights and international law.

We look forward to Canada's prompt response in this regard. We offer our prayers for the healing of the Earth and all its inhabitants.

Yours sincerely,



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Jennifer Henry  
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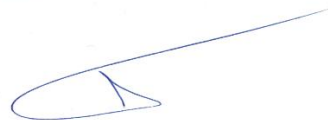
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