

27 December 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, P.C., M.P.
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 appreciation for your government's recent confirmation that the Canadian Embassy in Israel will remain in Tel Aviv. As an organization committed to peace and to respect for international law, MCC is deeply concerned that the United States' official recognition of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel profoundly threatens the prospects for a just and sustainable peace in the region.

MCC has worked in the Middle East for nearly 70 years, partnering with Palestinian and Israeli organizations that embrace nonviolent approaches to working for a just peace. Given our history in the region, MCC recognizes that both peoples—Palestinians and Israeli Jews—need to know they can live in a climate of peace and security without fear of violence, and that both regard Jerusalem (or at least a portion of it) as their longed-for capital. Further, MCC is committed to the principle of a shared Jerusalem in which the spiritual and historical significance of the city for Christians, Muslims, and Jews is recognized. Indeed, we firmly believe all three religious groups should be able to worship and practice their faiths freely.

The unilateral U.S. action to recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital, and thereby endorse Israel's annexation of East Jerusalem—considered occupied territory under international law—pre-empts and jeopardizes a genuine negotiated resolution to this critical issue. This action goes against the international community's longstanding consensus that the status of Jerusalem is yet to be settled. Moreover, it has significantly increased tensions in the region, stoked conflict and hostility, and undermined peoples' hopes for a lasting peace.

As Canada's long-held policy articulates, the permanent status of Jerusalem can only be resolved through a negotiated agreement between Israel and the Palestinians. In light of recent events, MCC welcomes the Canadian government's reaffirmation of this official position related to Jerusalem's special status.

At the same time, we believe that the Government of Canada can and must play a more proactive role in supporting a comprehensive peace agreement, and in speaking boldly and with clarity regarding actions that are counterproductive to this aim. 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 Bauman", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Rick Cober Bauman
Executive Director
MCC Canada

CC: Hon. Chrystia Freeland, Minister of Foreign Affairs
Matt DeCoursey, Parliamentary Secretary to the Minister of Foreign Affairs
Hon. Erin O'Toole, Foreign Affairs Critic, Conservative Party
Hélène Laverdière, Opposition Critic for Foreign Affairs, New Democratic Party
Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader, Official Opposition, Conservative Party
Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party