



December 15, 2017

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

Greetings of the Advent Season as we prepare anew to celebrate the birth of Jesus, Prince of Peace.

I write to express the appreciation of The United Church of Canada for your recent statement confirming that Canada's Embassy in Israel will remain in Tel Aviv, and will not be moved to Jerusalem. This position is supported by Canadians who value respect for international law, and deeply desire a just peace for Israelis and Palestinians.

We are grateful for this reiteration of Canada's policy related to the status of Jerusalem. It affirms that three faiths—Jews, Christians and Muslims, and two peoples—Palestinians and Israelis—all have special and unique relationships and historical connections to the city in their own right. United Church of Canada partners in Israel and Palestine have shared their deep concern that President Trump's declaration is further evidence of U.S. bias, discounting any perceptions that the United States has or could play a role as "honest broker" for a just resolution to the conflict in the Holy Land.

The international community does not recognize Israel's claim to all of Jerusalem, the status of which is to be decided through just and fair negotiations.

The United Church of Canada supports the Government of Canada's call for a just and negotiated resolution to the special status of Jerusalem, and urges you and Minister Freeland to provide courageous leadership in this critical global issue. Palestinian, Israeli, and U.S. partners of the United Church press for the current status quo arrangements in Jerusalem to remain until just negotiations resolve its status. Unilaterally endorsing Israel's occupation of East Jerusalem, which is considered occupied territory under international law, does not advance the possibility of a just and peaceful resolution.

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Prime Minister, we ask that Canada refrain from issuing any statements which might prejudice this status quo or any future negotiations on the status of Jerusalem. The United Church and partners in the region would welcome and support actions by your government to implement obligations under UN Security Council Resolution 2334, and take the lead in international and regional diplomatic efforts and support aimed at achieving, without delay, a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East.

Be assured of my personal prayers for you in the important leadership you give for all Canadians.

Wishing you and your family the blessings of Christmas.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jordan Cantwell". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

The Right Rev. Jordan Cantwell,
Moderator
The United Church of Canada

Cc: The Honourable Chrystia Freeland, Minister for Foreign Affairs
The Honourable Erin O'Toole, Foreign Affairs Critic, Conservative Party of Canada
Hélène Laverdière, Foreign Affairs Critic, New Democratic Party
Elizabeth May, Leader, Green Party of Canada
Rhéal Fortin, Leader, Bloc Québécois

Christie Neufeldt, Program Coordinator, Public Witness and Advocacy, UCC

