

To: David Coon, NB Member of the Legislative Assembly
Cc: Elizabeth May, MP

August 5, 2016

Dear David,

I write to you as a fellow New Brunswicker as the Green Party convention begins in Ottawa.

As you know, I served as a human rights observer in Bethlehem three years ago and I am still in touch daily with the situation on the ground in Palestine. I regret to inform you and other Green Party members that the situation for Palestinians continues to deteriorate. A few examples follow:

- Human Rights Watch reported on April 11, "Israeli security forces are abusing Palestinian children detained in the West Bank. The number of Palestinian children arrested by [Israeli](#) forces has more than doubled since October 2015."
- This summer Israel has cut water supplies to the West Bank and did not impose similar restrictions on Israeli settlements. What is ironic is the Israeli company that controls the water supply draws water primarily from an aquifer under the occupied Palestinian territory.
- According to Israeli human rights group B'Tselem, the number of demolitions of Palestinian homes and farm structures in the first six months of 2016 exceeded the total for all of 2015
- There have been a number of extrajudicial killings of Palestinians by Israeli forces this year.
- Israel continues to expand settlements and move the wall deeper into Palestinian territory.

Unfortunately, these are just a few of the many instances of increasing pressure placed on Palestinians by Israel in the West Bank.

In Gaza, the situation is bleaker. Rebuilding efforts are still being restricted by Israel following the war two years ago when Israeli forces killed over 500 Palestinian children including 180 under the age of 6.

In addition, Israel has restricted the movement of many leaders in Palestinian civil society including Omar Barghouti, the head of the BDS movement. Palestinian members of the Knesset are also under attack.

Meanwhile, Netanyahu's government and his supporters in Canada continue to conduct a relentless, well funded campaign to suppress the fundamental right of free speech for Canadians who support the non-violent BDS movement. Canadians who support BDS believe in the rule of international human rights and humanitarian law as well as the protections offered under the Fourth Geneva Conventions for all people including Palestinians. We call upon Israel to live up to its obligations under international law.

The claims that BDS supporters are anti-Semitic are spurious and unfounded. Many Jews support BDS as is evidenced by the membership of Independent Jewish Voices in Canada and Jewish Voices for Peace in the US. Internationally respected human rights advocates such as Desmond Tutu, Jimmy Carter, Stephen Hawking and Alice Walker all support BDS. They too believe that legitimate debate is a hallmark of liberal democracies.

Canadians believe in human rights, the rule of law and free and fair debate. Therein, I trust the Green Party will stand in favour of supporting the rights of Canadians who advocate for human rights and the rule of law for Palestinians this weekend.

Rev. Steve Berube

Co-chair: United Network for a Just Peace in Palestine and Israel.