



The United Church of Canada L'Église Unie du Canada

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June 4, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau , P.C., M.P.
Prime Minister of Canada
Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau;

Re: Canada's response to Israel's threat to annex parts of the occupied Palestinian territory

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

We represent members of the United Church of Canada in Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and the Gaspé in Quebec. The United Church has a history of supporting work towards a just and lasting peace in the Holy Land. Toward that end, we support and work with Palestinian and Israeli partners who nonviolently work towards a just and lasting peace.

We thank you for the vote by Canada in December 2019 at the UN General Assembly that supported Palestinians right to self determination.

We also want to thank you for the stand you took and shared with Canadians June 2nd denouncing the new Israeli government's plan to vote in the Knesset (likely July 1st) on annexing a significant part of the occupied Palestinian territories. Even though the European Union spoke out much earlier and used much stronger language, we were relieved to hear you uphold the existing Canadian policy in support of the two state solution as the way towards a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

As you are aware, the Israeli plan to annex Palestinian territory constitutes a grave breach of international law, specifically Article 147 of the IV Geneva Convention, prohibiting the appropriation of property. Such annexation of Palestinian land is aligned with and supported by the Trump Administration's proposed "peace plan" that has been condemned by many countries for being far too generous toward Israel and taking far too much away from

Palestinians. Both annexation and the Trump plan crush any possibility for peace and undermine the chance for the two state solution within a final status agreement.

It is extremely important for Canadians to be firmly on the side of international law and human rights for all people. As human rights and international law are allowed to erode to the detriment of more and more people, our own human and legal rights erode. Israel has committed and continues to commit numerous violations of Palestinian human rights according to the UN Universal Declaration of Human Rights. Any state – even the state of Israel – must be held accountable for its actions against the human rights of others and against international law. The longer they are allowed to act with impunity, all of us and our values of human life and democracy suffer.

You need to know that Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations have urgently called on the international community to condemn the proposed annexation. Palestinian Christian leaders, in KAIROS Palestine, have said, “Clear decisions are already taken by the UN. So why further waiting to apply what is already decided?” 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.

We are aware that 58 former diplomats and Liberal Cabinet Ministers have pointed out, "Territorial conquest and annexation are notorious for contributing to fateful results: war, political instability, economic ruin, systematic discrimination and human suffering."

Again, we thank you for publically denouncing the Israeli annexation plan and we further call on the government of Canada to:

- **publicly oppose the United States administration’s “Peace and Prosperity Plan”, announced January 28th, 2020, 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;**
- **appoint a special envoy to investigate human rights abuses against children in Palestine and Israel, and**
- **protect the human rights of Palestinians, including their right to self-determination, and to resist occupation and annexation.**

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 to our deep concerns about this urgent issue.

Signed by

Rev. Anne Hoganson and Kent Gibbons, co-chairs,
Justice, Mission and Outreach Committees
Serving eastern Regions of the United Church of Canada

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