



UNJPPI

United Network for Justice and Peace
in Palestine and Israel

7 January 2021

DELIVERED BY EMAIL

Mr. Jagmeet Singh, M.P.
Leader of the New Democratic Party
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario,
Canada
K1A 0A6

Email: jagmeet.singh@parl.gc.ca

Dear Mr. Singh,

The United Network of Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel ('UNJPPI') is a grassroots network of United Church of Canada members and friends working for a just peace in Palestine/Israel. As our network name highlights, we firmly believe that justice for all who live within Israel and the occupied Palestinian territory ('oPt') is an essential prerequisite for a lasting peace there. While justice means more than compliance with law, it necessarily includes compliance with International humanitarian law.

As you know, Israel has occupied the West Bank, East Jerusalem and Gaza since the Six Day War of 1967. It is the longest military occupation of the modern era. Many of Israel's obligations as an occupying country are set out in the Fourth Geneva Convention ('the Convention'). As a High Contracting Party to the Convention, Canada has a responsibility to encourage all countries to comply with its requirements.

One important Convention provision, set out in Article 56, requires Israel to ensure "the adoption and application of the prophylactic and preventive measures necessary to combat the spread of contagious diseases and epidemics". Article 47 of the Convention makes clear that Israel cannot escape its obligations to the indigenous residents of the oPt by any agreement with the authorities of the occupied territory. The Oslo Accords are one such agreement.

George Bartlett
UNJPPI Chair

web: www.unjppi.org email: info@unjppi.org

UNJPPI celebrates the fast action that Israel has taken in rolling out the Covid-19 vaccine. Canada's national media reports that Israel leads the world in this rollout. However, we are shocked to learn that it is not providing the vaccine to Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza or incarcerated in its prisons, despite providing it to Israelis living in illegal settlements in the oPt.

UNJPPI very much appreciates that two members of your caucus – Charlie Angus and Leah Gazan - have spoken out so clearly about Israel's obligations in this regard. As Leah Gazan so aptly stated:

"Life is valuable. All our blood runs red at the end of the day. We must speak out against excluding people from being vaccinated based on discriminatory decisions and a clear violation of [#HumanRights](#)."

In their statements, Ms Gazan and Mr. Angus reflect the distress many others feel at Israel's total disregard of the health needs of the Palestinians living under their military occupation.

Charlie Angus reports that in response to his statement B'Nai Brith Canada has accused him of peddling "anti-semitic conspiracy theories." With all due respect to B'Nai Brith, calling on Israel to comply with the obligations it took on when it became a party to the Convention is not antisemitism.

Respected Israeli human rights organization B'tselem has called on international stakeholders to urge Israel to fulfill its duties and moral responsibilities. See: https://www.btselem.org/press_releases/20210105_joint_statement_israel_must_provide_vaccines_to_palestinians?fbclid=IwAR2BgmugsByNST4da28rFsjM7-2JAQUacy49y-Mu-4sjJTfmShSQ36EhqfU

Here is a Democracy Now interview with Dr. Mustafa Barghouti, which very clearly describes the situation in the oPt which results from Israel's failure to fulfil its Convention responsibilities.

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=TWNHnTMPvUY>

A Financial Times report very much echoed many of the concerns expressed by Dr. Barghouti. It notes that there are no functioning airports in the Palestinian territories and Israel operates the only mass-storage facilities for vaccines requiring refrigeration, and all the borders except the one between Gaza and Egypt. It also notes that Israel "controls imports, especially in Gaza, whose healthcare system has withered under an 11-year land, sea and air blockade." See <https://www.ft.com/content/0e2f5918-d9af-4fdd-8a93-62093b4c6fd3>

UNJPPI hopes that all NDP caucus members will follow the excellent example provided by Leah Gazan and Charlie Angus, and we encourage you as NDP leader to strongly speak out in support of Leah Gazan and Charlie Angus and on the need for Israel to comply with its Convention Article 56 responsibilities.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "George Bartlett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a long, sweeping underline that extends to the right.

George Bartlett
Chair
UNJPPI