



May 12, 2016

The Honourable Stéphane Dion,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
House of Commons,
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

stephane.dion@international.gc.ca

Dear Minister Dion:

Greetings in this season of new life when The United Church of Canada as part of the Christian community celebrates the risen Christ.

The United Church of Canada has corresponded frequently with your office in recent months regarding Canada's role in realizing a just peace in Israel and Palestine, the absence of which continues to have serious implications for the entire region and the world. It is our sincere hope that a meeting between you and Canadian churches who are deeply concerned about this issue could be confirmed for the very near future.

The United Church of Canada has welcomed your government's stated commitment to restore Canadian leadership in the world, and your personal commitment to be an "honest broker" in the Middle East. Following on my recent letter to you dated February 10, 2016, and a previous letter welcoming the Prime Minister to office, I am writing once again to urge your government to take important steps as an honest broker toward achieving a just and lasting peace between Palestinians and Israelis.

Rooted in the belief that peacemaking is central to our life and witness as Christians, the United Church has sustained significant relationships with people and organizations in Israel and Palestine working daily towards a non-violent end to the conflict. Among other key positions, The United Church of Canada has affirmed that:

- The right to self-determination by both peoples should be respected;
- The Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory is a major obstacle to peace and must end immediately, and all the illegal Israeli settlements must be dismantled;
- United Nations' resolutions are the basis for peace and international law is applicable to the rights and responsibilities of the affected peoples; and
- A two-state solution must be viable politically, geographically, economically, and socially.

All of these positions are consistent with Canada's own policy on the Israeli-Palestinian situation. I speak for the United Church in expressing hope that the Government of Canada will take an important step to push for positive action beyond the current "dead-end." I urge you to motivate all parties into negotiations toward a just resolution by doing what several other countries, including Sweden and the Vatican, have done: recognize Palestine as a State. The argument that only through negotiations can a Palestinian State be realized ignores and denies Palestinians' right to self-determination.



To actively support Canadians' desire to make a real and valuable contribution to a more just and peaceful world, The United Church of Canada requests that the Canadian government live out its stated policy on Israel and Palestine. Living out Canadian policy would mean:

- Canada voting in congruence with its policy on relevant UN resolutions, including support for a two-state solution by recognizing Palestine as a State;
- Canada engaging from its stated policy in bilateral and multilateral relations;
- Canada speaking from its stated policy in public statements.

All would require both the State of Palestine and the State of Israel to adhere to international law—without exception.

I welcome an opportunity to meet with you in person to discuss concrete ways in which we can collaborate for a just peace in Palestine and Israel. Together with partners in the Holy Land, United Church members across the country are ready to support – and encourage -- the Canadian Government's role as an honest broker for peace in the Palestine-Israeli conflict. Considering that the situation in Palestine and Israel is rapidly deteriorating after nearly 50 years of occupation, I believe the need for Canada to act is urgent.

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

Regards,



Jordan Cantwell
Moderator/Moderatrice
The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

cc:

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau, Prime Minister of Canada
The Honourable Tony Clement, 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