



**Canadian Lutheran
World Relief**

Creating a world where people live in justice, peace and dignity



**Evangelical Lutheran
Church in Canada**

In Mission for Others

June 15, 2020

The Hon. François-Philippe Champagne, P.C., M.P.
Minister for Foreign Affairs
House of Commons
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**RE: Canada must champion international law and strongly oppose
the Israeli governments' plans to annex more land in the West Bank**

Dear Minister Champagne,

We write to you today to express our grave concern regarding the government of Israel's imminent plans to annex segments of West Bank, which, according to international law, is occupied Palestinian land. As representatives of two Canadian Lutheran bodies that have been working in the Middle East for over 65 years, we are supporting our local partners in their request to urge the Government of Canada to honour its admirable commitments to human rights and international law and use effective measures to strongly oppose this plan.

Canada Lutheran World Relief (CLWR) and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC) have long supported the goal of achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East through the realization of a viable and sustainable two-state solution. We work in partnership with the Lutheran World Federation (LWF) Jerusalem Program and the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and are supported by donations from individuals and church congregations, and the generosity of the Government of Canada. Through these partnerships we implement initiatives aimed at meeting the health needs of Palestinians by providing high-quality, specialized medical services through Augusta Victoria Hospital (AVH); training and equipping Palestinian women (including women with disabilities) through the LWF Vocational Training Program; and providing primary education for future Palestinian leaders through the ELCJHL.

As we support our partners in the region, we are constantly reminded that the impact of our work is critically limited by the current political situation and the systemic injustices that actively impoverish and deny basic rights to Palestinians. For these reasons, we implore you not to abandon the work for durable, just and sustainable political solutions in keeping with UN Resolutions 446 and 465 and the Fourth Geneva Convention call for a cessation of all settlement activities and a withdrawal from settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory to the 1967 armistice boundary (the “Green Line”).

The proposed annexation of additional Palestinian land is not only contrary to these internal agreements and international law, but it will also almost completely sever any thread of hope that still remains in establishing a viable two-state solution.

The announced intentions of the Israeli government have already caused a breakdown in collaboration and coordination between the Palestinian Authority and the Israeli Government, with Palestinian President Mahmud Abbas calling off “all agreements and understandings with the American and Israeli governments and of all the commitments based on these understandings and agreements, including the security ones”.¹ Our partners are already experiencing first-hand the results of this increased political tension as patients with cancer are now facing barriers in receiving the necessary referrals to access life-saving quality health care services at the Augusta Victoria Hospital. The subsequent annexation of land could lead to the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority, will eradicate any potential for a viable and contiguous Palestinian state, and will almost certainly lead to increase of distrust, violence, extremist voices that will have far reaching negative implications on the lives of Israelis and Palestinians.

Despite the Government of Canada’s vocal support for human rights - particularly the rights of women and girls—and international law on the international stage, we have found Canada’s voice on this particular issue to be lacking, especially when contrasted with the strong response that was made to the Russian annexation of Crimea in 2014.

In light of the situation, we urge the Canadian Government to show leadership in:

- Taking decisive action, including employing all available lawful countermeasures to uphold accountability, in order to halt further annexation and severance of Palestinian territorial integrity, and ensure rapid reversal of those measures announced or already implemented;
- Rejecting the inequitable “Peace to Prosperity” plan for Israel and Palestine presented by the United States administration and urgently advance an alternative peace plan, based on human rights, international law, and realisation of self-determination for all peoples;

¹ *The Guardian*, May 20th, 2020

- Working 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;
- Protecting the human rights of Palestinians, including their right to self-determination, and to resist occupation and annexation; and
- Review the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement to insure that Palestinian producers have access to Canadian markets and that Canadian Trade Policy does not legitimate Israel's tacit annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories;

Thank you for your consideration of this appeal. We look forward to the Government of Canada's prompt response in this matter.

Yours Sincerely,



The Rev. Karin Achtelstetter
Executive Director, Canadian Lutheran World Relief



The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
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