



Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

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February 4, 2020

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau
Prime Minister of Canada
pm@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister:

On behalf of the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada (ELCIC), I am writing to express deep concern over the “Peace to Prosperity” plan for Israel and Palestine presented by the United States (U.S.) administration last week.

Lasting peace is an outcome of dialogue, negotiation and cooperation between conflicting parties. Peace can never be unilaterally imposed. Palestinians must be meaningfully involved as part of any peace process. The recent U.S. plan entrenches the occupation. Any path to peace needs to be based on dignity, equality, human rights and self-determination. Ending the occupation is an essential first step for making the journey toward peace.

Our international church partners the Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) and the Lutheran World Federation (LWF), have shared with us their concerns that this plan violates United Nations (UN) resolutions and international law. It ignores 1967 borders, denies the Right of Return to every Palestinian refugee, gives Israel sovereignty over the Jordan Valley and Israeli settlements, and fails to ensure that Jerusalem is an open city of two peoples and three faiths.

In 2009, the ELCIC National Convention adopted a resolution calling on our church to support the goal of a comprehensive, just and lasting peace in the Middle East. Grounded in our long-term relationship with the ELCJHL, the resolution calls for end to the occupation and for the creation of a Palestinian state living side-by-side in peace and security with Israel. It affirms Canada’s position that Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are in violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and calls for a cessation of all settlement activities and a withdrawal from settlements in the occupied Palestinian territory to the 1967 armistice boundary. It supports a shared Jerusalem that can serve as a capital to both Palestine and Israel, with full rights in the city for Jews, Christians, and Muslim. The ELCIC calls for an end to terrorism and violence and commits our members to supporting our partners in working for peace through solidarity and prayer.

In November 2019, I visited Israel and Palestine and witnessed first hand the challenges to peace that exist in the Holy Land, the consequences of human rights violations and the ongoing humanitarian crisis in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip. The effects of the blockade in Gaza

are particularly horrifying: lack of water, poverty, unemployment and intense feelings of desperation.

I ask you to publicly demonstrate Canada's opposition to the U.S. Administration's unilateral plan. I ask you to support and call for the development of an alternative plan based on human rights principles, international law and the realization of Palestinian People's right of return and right to self-determination. I urge you to take immediate actions to reduce the humanitarian suffering in the West Bank and Gaza Strip, including encouraging Israel to lift the blockade on Gaza.

Yours in Christ,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Susan C. Johnson", with a small cross symbol to the left.

The Rev. Susan C. Johnson
National Bishop, Evangelical Lutheran Church in Canada

cc: Hon. Andrew Scheer, Leader of the Official Opposition
Hon. Jagmeet Singh, Leader of the NDP
Hon. Elizabeth May, Leader of the Green Party
Yves-François Blanchet, Leader of the Bloc Québécois
Bishop Sani-Ibrahim Azar, ELCJHL
Archbishop Dr. Panti Filibus Musa, LWF President
Rev. Dr. Martin Junge, LWF General Secretary
ELCIC National Church Council