

*Canadians for Justice and Peace
in the Middle East*
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December 23rd, 2010

Hikmet Ersek
CEO-Western Union
12500 E. Belford Ave
Englewood, CO 80112, USA

Dear Mr. Ersek,

I am writing to ask Western Union to stop collaborating with the Israeli government and end its commercial investments in the illegal Israeli colonies in the occupied Palestinian territories. I consider this association to reflect very negatively on Western Union and urge this action on your part, because it is the appropriate legal and ethical position for your company.

I am urging this change of *Western Union* company policy for these reasons:

- First, Palestinian civil society has called on the international community to boycott all institutions which directly or indirectly support the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territory until Israel complies with international law and universal principles of human rights vis-à-vis the Palestinians and their territory.
- Second, Western Union owns a number of agencies in Israel, many of which are located in major colonies such as Ariel, Kiryat Arba and Ma'ale Adunim. Under international law – particularly the UN Security Council Resolutions 446 and 465, and the Fourth Geneva Convention (Art. 49) – the establishment of colonies and colonial infrastructure on occupied territory is not only illegal, but also regarded as a war crime by the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. According to the UN Human Rights Norms for Business, unanimously adopted in 2003, any involvement of society in war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of torture or violations of humanitarian and international law is illegal. Under this principle, Western Union should not profit in any way from the illegal occupation of Palestinian territories.
- Third, it is the Israel Postal Company Ltd. that is Western Union's licensed operator in Israel. The postal company is an exclusively state-owned corporation monopolizing Israeli postal services, which played a role in the suspension of mail delivery to Gaza in July 2010. By doing business with this company, Western Union is endorsing the siege of Gaza and breaching international law. According to the Fourth Geneva Convention (Art 25), all occupying forces must allow the residents of the occupied territory to maintain contact with the outside, and that "this correspondence shall be forwarded speedily and without undue delay" and that if becomes difficult or impossible to do so, the occupier must fulfill their obligation under the best possible conditions.

The organization I represent, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), is an organization whose mission is to empower Canadians to promote justice, development and peace in the Middle East. In the coming months and years, we will be promoting a large and growing

campaign to get Canadian citizens and organs of civil society to boycott and divest from Israel. As a grassroots, secular, non-partisan volunteer organization, our policies are founded in 1) respect for international law, 2) a belief in a single standard for all, and 3) the position that violence is not a solution. We have 27,000 adherents across Canada, and active groups in numerous major Canadian cities. Our Website is www.cjpme.org.

The fundamentals of the situation in Israel-Palestine are simple. The UN Partition Plan of 1947 dictated that two states be created in Palestine: an Israeli one, and a Palestinian one. In 1948, the Israeli state was created, but the Palestinian one was not. In 1967, Israel took control of all the land that was to become a Palestinian state (including East Jerusalem, the West Bank, and the Gaza Strip), and continues to effectively control these territories, denying Palestinians their right to self-determination, as well as dozens of civil, human and humanitarian rights. This occupation is recognized as a hostile military occupation – as reflected by the unanimous vote of the Signatories to the Fourth Geneva Convention of Dec. 5, 2001.

The call for a boycott of Israel on the part of the Palestinians because of rights abuses is not a frivolous one. The UN General Assembly votes yearly and decisively on the rights violations of the Palestinians by the Israelis. For illustration, I provide three examples below:

- Resolution 63/98 (adopted Dec. 18, 2008), Israeli practices affecting the human rights of the Palestinian people in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, **passed by a vote of 165-to-8**. A parallel resolution in 2007 passed by a vote of 156-to-7. A parallel resolution in 2006 passed by a vote of 157-to-9.
- Resolution 63/97 (adopted Dec. 18, 2008), Israeli settlements in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, including East Jerusalem, and the occupied Syrian Golan, **passed by a vote of 171-to-6**. A parallel resolution in 2007 passed by a vote of 165-to-7. A parallel resolution in 2006 passed by a vote of 162-to-8.
- Resolution 63/97 (adopted Dec. 18, 2008), Applicability of the Geneva Convention relative to the Protection of Civilian Persons in Time of War, of 12 August 1949, to the Occupied Territory, including Jerusalem, and other occupied Arab territories, **passed by a vote of 173-to-6**. A parallel resolution in 2007 passed by a vote of 169-to-6. A parallel resolution in 2006 passed by a vote of 165-to-7.

While the UN General Assembly votes decisively on these issues each year, action from the UN is stymied each year because the UN Security Council – the enforcement arm of the UN – refuses to intervene. This inaction is due to the political relationship between the United States and Israel: the United States typically vetoes Security Council resolutions which would put pressure on Israel to respect the norms of international law.

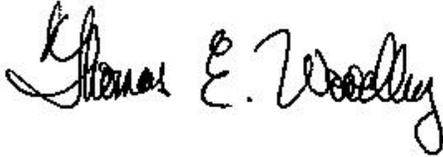
By collaborating with the Israeli government through its partnership with Israel Postal Company and drawing profit from its investments in illegal Israeli colonies, Western Union is endorsing, taking part and even allowing Israel to maintain its colonization and occupation of Palestinian territories; something that has been declared illegal by some of the most important international authorities.

For the reasons provided above, my organization is preparing to launch a boycott campaign focusing on Western Union. I strongly urge you to stop all forms of collaboration with the Israeli government, and to end your commercial presence in the illegal Israeli colonies, such that my organization and its adherents are not forced to follow this course of action. The action against Apartheid South Africa in the 1970s and 1980s did not begin with states, but with an outcry and action from civil society, and with the most ethical businesses being the first to participate in the

boycott. May *Western Union* continue to be a leader in ethical business practices by being one of the leaders in the current boycott campaign.

Should you have questions about the justification for my organization's campaign, or about specifics of the Israel-Palestine conflict, I would be happy to provide you any information you may desire.

I look forward to your favourable response and to encouraging our adherents to do business with *Western Union* as an ethical place of business once it has changed its policies vis-à-vis its presence in the illegally occupied Palestinian territory.



Thomas E. Woodley
President, Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East