



*Canadians for Justice and Peace
in the Middle East*
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Mar. 29, 2016

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

Dear Mr. Dion,

I am writing to you and Mr. Trudeau to ask you either to:

- 1) Start condemning Canadians for promoting BDS, as required under the Parliamentary motion that passed on Feb. 22nd, or
- 2) Renounce this absurd and insulting motion.

If you choose the first option above, I attach a list of over 3000 Canadians who must be condemned “individually” as per this motion. Each of these Canadians signed a petition asking (http://cjpme.org/condemn_me) “to be individually condemned for, as appropriate, [their] thoughts, words, and actions, promoting BDS.”

If you choose option one above, I am perhaps the first person you will need to condemn. I am the leader of a non-profit organization – Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East – which has over 100,000 adherents, and which is committed to promoting the BDS (boycott, divestment and sanctions) movement directed against Israel. We believe that, as per the stated objectives of the movement,¹ BDS is a democratic and non-violent means of pressuring Israel to respect the human rights of Palestinians. As per our mission to empower Canadians to promote justice, development and peace in the Middle East, we have hosted a “Boycott Centre” for several years on our Website. In addition to other initiatives, this Centre encourages the boycott of several Israel companies with merchandise in Canadian stores, and the reasons why specific companies are egregious violators of Palestinian human rights.

More recently, my organization has launched a “BDS Sticky Notes” campaign to encourage the marking of Israeli merchandise in Canadian stores. These sticky notes read, “Warning, do not buy this product. Made in Israel: A country violating international law, the 4th Geneva Convention, and fundamental human rights. Stand up for human rights. Boycott Israel until it respects international law. [#BDS](http://bdsmovement.net)” In the past month, we have distributed almost 1000 free pads to Canadians across the country. I’ve enclosed a complimentary BDS Sticky Note pad for your inspection.

I have enclosed two pictures of myself affixing these BDS sticky notes to Israeli merchandise in Canadian stores. In one picture, you see me affixing the notes to a box of Medjool dates in a Costco store in Montreal. 60% of Israeli dates are grown on land in the Jordan valley in the West Bank which has been illegally confiscated from its Palestinian owners. In another, you see me affixing the notes to a product of Keter Plastic in a Canadian Tire store in Montreal. Keter Plastic

owns and operates two plants in illegal Israeli colonies established within the occupied West Bank: one in Israel's Barkan Industrial Zone, and another in Oranit. The establishment of colonies and colonial infrastructure on militarily occupied territories is illegal according to Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, and is considered a war crime according to the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. Furthermore, the continuing establishment of Jewish-only colonies on Palestinian land significantly hinders the achievement of a "comprehensive just and lasting peace deal in the Middle East," as asserted in UN Security Council Resolution 446 (March 22, 1979).

These pictures have been published widely on our Website and Facebook page in an effort to encourage Canadians across the country to do the same. As a result of this campaign, hundreds of Canadians across the country are equipped with these BDS notes – and we have received dozens of selfies from Canadians from Victoria, BC to St. John's, NL. Obviously, in a free and democratic society, people are free to agree or disagree with me, but I am a proud promoter of the BDS movement in Canada.

I do note, of course, that you seem to disagree with me, based on your speech in the House of Commons on Feb. 18th.² Personally, I found your speech quite curious for the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, as it seemed quite divorced from the realities of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. For one, your speech seemed to indicate that a negotiated solution between Israel and the Palestinians is just around the corner. Apart from the fact that years of scathing UN resolutions, a biting ICJ decision, and literally decades of negotiations have done nothing to improve conditions for the Palestinians, it seems that you had forgotten that:

- Israel's current Prime Minister, Benjamin Netanyahu, was elected last year on a promise that he would never allow creation of an independent Palestinian state. (Note that this position has been part of the official Likud party platform for years.)³
- On April 24, 2014, Israel announced its withdrawal from US-sponsored peace negotiations. That is, negotiations have not taken place for almost two years.

Under the above circumstances, would you assume that "dialogue" with Mr. Netanyahu could be fruitful? If so, you are either highly optimistic, or very paternalistic towards the Palestinians. Israel has occupied the West Bank continuously since 1967 – almost 50 years ago – and *every* successive Israeli government has deepened the colonization of Palestinian territory. How many more generations of Palestinians must forego their human rights while Israel decides whether it's ready for – in your words – "building bridges," "interaction," and "collaboration"?

Your speech was quite curious also because it contained language that was disturbingly similar to rhetoric that emerged in an anti-BDS conference in West Jerusalem earlier in February.⁴ You argued, for instance, that "Peace emerges from building bridges between peoples, not from rejection. Peace emerges from more interaction, more collaboration, not the opposite." These lines of yours parallel several lines from a slide at the anti-BDS conference (see below) entitled, "The Sentences that will Defeat BDS." The sentences they propose to "Defeat BDS" were, "Peace is paved with diplomacy and discussion, not isolation," "Cooperation, not continued conflict," and "Solutions come from engagement, not silence."

Or compare your suggestions to those of Dov Lipman, Director of the Department of Zionist Operations for the World Zionist Organization in his recent Jerusalem Post article entitled, “How Israel will win the public diplomacy war.”⁵



| The Honorable Stéphane Dion, Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs <i>Why the Liberals support the anti-BDS motion:</i> | Dov Lipman, Director of the Dept. of Zionist Operations, World Zionist Organization <i>Points that work best to combat BDS:</i> |
|--|---|
| “Peace emerges from more interaction, more collaboration, not the opposite.” | “Peace is paved with diplomacy and discussion, not isolation.” |
| “The one-sided nature of the BDS movement is in itself a problem [...] It targets Israel alone.” | “BDS diminishes the prospect for peace because it blames only one side.” |
| “Dialogue and honest and firm debate, not ostracism and intimidation, will rally support for truly promising solutions.” | “We need real solutions for a last peace, not more of the divisive rhetoric. Let’s work together for understanding, respect and peace.” |
| “Peace emerges from building bridges between peoples, not from rejection.” | “Boycotts divide people, and that’s part of a problem – not a solution.” |

I would like to emphasize again that these catch-phrases you have mirrored are not designed to promote peace, coexistence, or justice between Israelis and Palestinians, but rather are shrewd slogans developed by Israeli marketing professionals seeking to snuff out the BDS movement.

Don’t get me wrong, I am not against negotiations and dialogue, but I am nevertheless keenly aware of the decades of human rights abuses endured by Palestinians. As recently as Jan. 19, 2016, Human Rights Watch (HRW) issued a lengthy report which was extremely harsh in its analysis of Israel’s exploitative colonist practices in the Palestinian territories. It was especially critical of Israeli businesses which choose to set up shop illegally in the Israeli-occupied West Bank:

Settlement businesses depend on and benefit from Israel’s unlawful confiscation of Palestinian land and other resources, and facilitate the functioning and growth of settlements. Settlement-related activities also directly benefit from Israel’s discriminatory

policies in planning and zoning, the allocation of land, natural resources, financial incentives, and access to utilities and infrastructure. These policies result in the forced displacement of Palestinians and place Palestinians at an enormous disadvantage in comparison with settlers. Israel's discriminatory restrictions on Palestinians have harmed the Palestinian economy and left many Palestinians dependent on jobs in settlements—a dependency that settlement proponents then cite to justify settlement businesses.⁶

I might point out that, exactly as per HRW's critique, your speech tried to justify opposition to BDS by citing what you refer to as the "poignant" example of SodaStream, a company which – under pressure from BDS – made the ethical decision to move a factory illegally located in the West Bank into Israel proper. Of course, SodaStream could continue to employ Palestinians who live as a type of economic subclass in Israel proper even after withdrawing from the West Bank. And to its credit, SodaStream tried. After it withdrew from the West Bank, it continued to offer work to its Palestinian employees from the West Bank, but the government of Israel denied the work permits. Just weeks ago, SodaStream's CEO stated in frustration, "The government of Israel somehow couldn't overcome their own bureaucracy or hard-headedness and figure out the tremendous challenge of enabling 74 good people... to continue to let them do what they have been doing."⁷

So the Palestinian SodaStream employees lost their jobs *not* because the SodaStream factory was moved, but because Israel refused to approve their work permits after it moved.

You could perhaps temper your concern for the Palestinians who may lose their jobs at illegal factories like SodaStream's if you consider a 2013 World Bank report.⁸ This report found that the Palestinian economy could expand by over a third if Israel simply loosened its military occupation. That is, if Israel stopped obstructing Palestinian commercial activity in the West Bank, the Palestinian economy would grow naturally by \$3.4 billion. Hopefully, now armed with this knowledge, you would not argue that it's better to save the livelihoods of 74 families instead of the millions who would be helped through a loosening or cessation of Israel's military occupation of the Palestinian territories.

At this point it might be worthwhile to point out that, despite your opposition, the BDS movement has chalked up several victories just since the beginning of 2016. Among other recent accomplishments, like SodaStream, the cosmetics company Ahava announced that it will be removing its manufacturing facilities illegally located in the Palestinian West Bank. International security firm G4S also recently announced that it will discontinue all Israeli contracts with the Israeli military, prison services, police and checkpoints, installations where the rights of Palestinians are regularly scorned. The Financial Times reported that G4S was "extracting itself from reputationally damaging work."⁹

With the above examples, it is clear that BDS is working. Israel isn't being destroyed or "delegitimized," but the leaders of its companies are reflecting on their activities and changing their behaviour – exactly as anticipated by the visionaries of the BDS movement. Perhaps, as per the objectives of the BDS movement, such corporate leaders and principled Israeli citizens will pressure the Israeli government to bring an end to Israel's occupation of Palestinian land and the other demands of the BDS movement. Just as with the boycott of South Africa, it is likely that principled leadership will come not from politicians – whether Israeli or Canadian – but from grassroots leaders in civil society.

As I reviewed the Parliamentary debate on your motion, I was flabbergasted at how not a single member of the Chamber mentioned the actual stated objectives of the BDS movement, or when the BDS movement is slated to come to an end. I have attached a factsheet my organization produced entitled, “BDS: Informing the Parliamentary Debate.”¹⁰ This pamphlet presents the documented objectives of BDS, and debunks the hearsay and innuendo introduced during the Parliamentary “debate.” It also demonstrates how the objectives of BDS align perfectly with Canada’s stated positions on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict, and international law. I would welcome the opportunity to discuss the actual demands of the BDS movement with you, so that you judge for yourself whether the allegations made against it have any merit.

For the moment, however, the options for you and Mr. Trudeau remain, either:

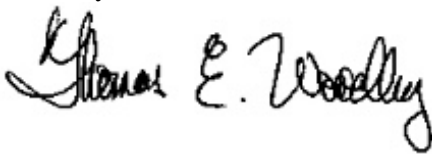
- 1) Start condemning Canadians for promoting BDS, as required under the Parliamentary motion that passed on Feb. 22nd, or
- 2) Renounce this absurd and insulting motion.

If your speech on Feb. 18th were indeed heartfelt, and you believe in the motion your party supported, then please carry out the required condemnations – of me and the other 3000 Canadians who stand proudly for the human rights of dispossessed peoples. If you’re not going to carry out the condemnations, then show some spine and renounce the anti-BDS motion. If you do neither, then you prove that the goal of the motion was simply to intimidate critics of Israel, or worse, to score a few political points at the expense of our right to free speech.

Please note that I have forwarded a copy of this letter and its attachments to all of the Canadian media that expressed an interest in the motion in February, including the CBC, the Globe and Mail and others.

We have placed a counter on our Website (www.cjpme.org), counting the hours and minutes since the passage of your anti-BDS motion. With every day, hour and minute that passes without a response from you, the absurdity and offensiveness of the anti-BDS motion and its assault on our Charter right to free expression become ever more clear.

Sincerely,



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

¹ “Palestinian Civil Society Call for BDS,” Palestinian BDS National Committee, <http://bdsmovement.net/call> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

² Hansard Debate, Contents, 42nd Parliament, 1st Session, Thursday, Feb. 18, 2016, <http://www.parl.gc.ca/HousePublications/Publication.aspx?Pub=hansard&Language=E&Mode=1&Parl=42&Ses=1&DocId=8105393&File=0> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

³ The 2006 Likud election platform stated: “The Government of Israel flatly rejects the establishment of a Palestinian Arab state West of the Jordan river. The Palestinians can run their lives freely in the framework of self-rule, but not as an independent and sovereign state. Thus, for example, in matters of foreign affairs, security, immigration and ecology, their activity shall be limited in accordance with imperatives of Israel’s existence, security and national needs.”

⁴ Abunimah, Ali, “Nazi genocide and ‘girls in bikinis’ failing to sell Israel, experts say,” The Electronic Intifada, Feb. 23, 2016, <https://electronicintifada.net/blogs/ali-abunimah/nazi-genocide-and-girls-bikinis-failing-sell-israel-experts-say> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

⁵ Lipman, Dov, “How Israel will win the public diplomacy war,” The Jerusalem Post, Mar. 3, 2016, <http://www.jpost.com/Opinion/How-Israel-will-win-the-public-diplomacy-war-446871> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

⁶ “Occupation, Inc.: How Settlement Businesses Contribute to Israel’s Violations of Palestinian Rights,” Human Rights Watch, Jan. 19, 2016, <https://www.hrw.org/report/2016/01/19/occupation-inc/how-settlement-businesses-contribute-israels-violations-palestinian> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

⁷ Lieber, Dov, “SodaStream CEO: Idiomatic Israeli red tape, not BDS, got Palestinians fired,” Times of Israel, Mar. 2, 2016, <http://www.timesofisrael.com/sodastream-ceo-idiomatic-israeli-red-tape-not-bds-got-palestinians-fired/> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

⁸ “Palestinians Access to Area C Key to Economic Recovery and Sustainable Growth,” The World Bank, Oct. 8, 2013, <http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/10/07/palestinians-access-area-c-economic-recovery-sustainable-growth> accessed Mar. 20, 2016, or “Occupation costs Palestinians 'billions,’” Aljazeera English, Oct. 9, 2013, <http://www.aljazeera.com/news/middleeast/2013/10/occupation-costs-palestinians-billions-20131086759480736.html> accessed Mar. 20, 2016

⁹ Plimmer, Gill and Thomas, Nathalie, “G4S shares plunge as cost of UK asylum services hits profits,” Financial Times, Mar. 9, 2016, <http://www.ft.com/cms/s/0/72789bbe-e5cf-11e5-bc31-138df2ae9ee6.html#axzz43j3nMqJL> accessed Mar. 24, 2016

¹⁰ “BDS: Informing the Parliamentary Debate,” CJPME, February, 2016, http://www.cjpme.org/fs_196 accessed Mar. 20, 2016