

*Canadians for Justice and Peace
in the Middle East*
10090 Saint-Laurent, Suite 201B
Montreal, QC H3L 2N7
(438) 380-5410
Mar. 29, 2016

The Honourable Thomas Mulcair
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Mulcair,

I am writing to you to point out that the Canadian government has, to date, not issued a single condemnation as per the motion passed in the House of Commons on Feb. 22 by a vote of 229-51. In that motion, the government was called upon to “to condemn any and all attempts by Canadian organizations, groups or individuals to promote the BDS movement.” The vote was passed more than a month ago, and the failure to condemn a single individual or group during this time is a clear failure to act on the intents of the motion.

Hopefully, given that you and the NDP voted against this motion, you and your fellow caucus members take some satisfaction in the government’s unwillingness to follow through on the bizarre and offensive threat of this motion.

In parallel to my letter to you, I have sent a letter to Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, and Foreign Minister Stéphane Dion, challenging them 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.

I suggest that if they do neither, they demonstrate 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 Canadians’ right to free speech.

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.

My organization is hosting a petition (http://cjpme.org/condemn_me) – which has thus far garnered over 3000 signatures. The Canadian signatories on this petition challenge the government to condemn them “individually” (as per the motion) for their proud stance for the human rights of dispossessed peoples. They join with me in not being willing to allow their freedom of expression to be so obviously attacked and undermined.

I know that you and your party defended your vote on this motion on the basis of freedom of expression, and this is admirable. However, in addition, the anti-BDS motion should have been rejected also because BDS is good policy, both for civil society, and for the Canadian government. The objectives of the BDS movement align wholly with Canada’s own foreign policy objectives on Palestine-Israel as laid out on Canada’s Global Affairs Website.

Politicians often reassure me that they and their party fully support a negotiated two-state solution in Palestine-Israel. Practically, however, these politicians and their parties do nothing to actually facilitate such a solution, whether in their diplomacy or their discourse. The current government in Israel was elected after its leader promised that he would never allow for the creation of a Palestinian state. How, I ask, do we expect the two-state solution to come about, if not through the efforts of principled people around the world, and through non-violent pressure tactics such as BDS?

In my letter to Trudeau and Dion, I point out how effective the BDS movement has been – with examples of how just recently, Ahava, SodaStream and other businesses have ceased their illegal commerce in the Palestinian territories. BDS is working because the leaders of its companies are reflecting on their activities and changing their behaviour – exactly as anticipated by the visionaries of the BDS movement.

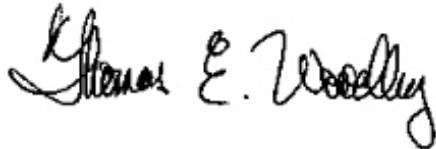
I attach a factsheet my organization produced entitled, “BDS: Informing the Parliamentary Debate.”² This factsheet presents the documented objectives of BDS, and debunks the hearsay and innuendo introduced during the Parliamentary “debate.” It also lays out how the objectives of BDS align perfectly with 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.

In regard to its inaction on the Feb. 22 motion, I can only conclude that the Liberal government is not convinced of the merits of the motion, either because of the question of “free expression,” or because of the merits of BDS. I am even beginning to suspect that even the Conservatives question the credence of their motion. Perhaps the only goal of for both Liberals and Conservatives was to score some political points, at the expense of Canadians’ Charter right to freedom of expression.

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 also placed a counter on our Website (www.cjpme.org), counting the hours and minutes since the passage of the anti-BDS motion. With every day, hour and minute that passes without a response from the government, 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 “BDS: Informing the Parliamentary Debate,” CJPME, February, 2016, http://www.cjpme.org/fs_196 accessed Mar. 20, 2016