

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

The Honourable Michelle Rempel
House of Commons
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A6

Dear Ms. Rempel,

I am writing to you to inquire why the Canadian government has, to date, not issued a single condemnation as per the motion jointly authored by you, and passed in the House of Commons on Feb. 22 by a vote of 229-51. In that motion, the government is 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.

I myself 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, 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, people are free to agree or disagree with me, but I am a proud promoter of the BDS movement in Canada.

In addition to this documentation on my own promotion of BDS, I also attach a petition (http://cjpme.org/condemn_me) signed by more than 3000 Canadians since Feb. 22. In light of your motion, these Canadians “petition the Canadian government to be individually condemned for, as appropriate, [their] thoughts, words, and actions, promoting BDS.”

It might be worthwhile to point out that the BDS movement has chalked up several victories just since the beginning of 2016. Among other recent accomplishments, 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 which involve Israeli prisons and military checkpoints, installations where the rights of Palestinians are regularly scorned.

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.

Unfortunately, rather than reflecting on the human rights concerns of those promoting the BDS movement, the current Israeli government has simply sought to attack and discredit those individuals and groups supporting the movement. Presumably, it is easier for Israel to slander its critics – even when these critics are Jewish themselves – rather than to take such criticisms to heart. It is perhaps also relevant that Israel benefits lavishly from the confiscation and unbridled exploitation of Palestinian resources.¹

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. It is shameful that the debate on this motion was so disconnected from the facts. I honestly fear for the future of our country if this is the standard of behaviour in our highest legislative assembly. For your convenience, I have attached a factsheet my organization produced entitled, “BDS: Informing the Parliamentary Debate.”² This pamphlet presents the documented objectives of BDS, and debunks the hearsay and innuendo introduced during the Parliamentary debate.

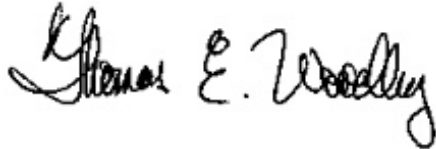
Ultimately, in regard to your anti-BDS gesture in Parliament, I can only conclude that the government is not convinced of the merits of the motion. Otherwise, how could one explain its

inaction? I am also beginning to suspect that you too question the credence of your motion. Perhaps the only goal of the motion was simply to intimidate critics of Israel, or to score a few political points at the expense of our right to freedom of expression. Perhaps that is why you have failed to hold the government to account for its inaction.

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 your 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. Please be so kind as to inform me when you have any information as to when the government is planning to act on your anti-BDS motion of Feb. 22 – the government now has more than 3000 Canadians who must be condemned under it. Otherwise, with every day, hour and minute that passes, the absurdity and offensiveness of your anti-BDS motion and its assault on our Charter right to free expression becomes ever more clear.

Sincerely,



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

¹ “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

² “BDS: Informing the Parliamentary Debate,” CJPME, February, 2016, http://www.cjpme.org/fs_196 accessed Mar. 20, 2016