



**Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice**

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Monday, February 29<sup>th</sup>, 2016

The Right Honourable Justin Trudeau  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister Trudeau,

I write to you as President of Canadian Unitarians for Social Justice (CUSJ), a national, faith-based organization that works for human rights, social justice, and peace in the world.

In December of 2015, CUSJ passed a resolution calling for a boycott of products and companies operating in the Occupied Territories, as well as a ban on federal and provincial state-funded lending to such companies. We are in good company with universities, churches, trade unions and civil society organizations around the world, who also support in part, or wholly, the Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against the State of Israel.

CUSJ supports the equal worth and dignity, and right to peace and security, for both Jewish and Palestinian people. The continued destruction of Palestinian homes and villages, the enforced resettlement of the indigenous Bedouins, and the greatly increased expansion of Jewish settlements in the Occupied Territories, including East Jerusalem, not to mention the concrete impact of the Separation Wall, will not bring peace and security to the Middle East - quite the contrary!

CUSJ is therefore extremely concerned that your governing party largely supported

the Conservative anti-BDS motion. Contrary to the wording of the Opposition's motion put before the House, **the BDS movement in no way promotes "the demonization and delegitimization of the State of Israel"**. Such political rhetoric only serves to further alienate and divide opposing factions, both in Canada and the Middle East. Such divisive language ill befits your newly formed government and demeans the efforts of those who are attempting to bring about a just peace in the 'Holy Land'. Boycotts are a legitimate, peaceful and democratic means of effecting change when one nation is abusing its own citizens or otherwise contravening international laws.

CUSJ stands in solidarity with those who attempt, as Canadians did with Apartheid South Africa in 1965, the peaceful, non-violent tactic of BDS. Only the Bloc Québécois argued that the BDS campaign constitutes legitimate criticism of Israeli policies. To quote the United Church of Canada, together with other like-minded organizations: "Criticizing or opposing Canada's policies and/or a foreign country's policies should not be condemned: it is the essence of our freedom and democracy." It is also enshrined in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms.

If the Canadian government wants to be a true friend to Israel, we must help that country find a way out of the current morass, so that there may be a lasting peace for both Jewish and Arab Israelis and Palestinians. CUSJ urges you and your government to be part of the global effort to promote a non-violent, negotiated end to the occupation and a just peace in the Middle East.

We urge you to stand firmly for democracy and overturn this divisive motion. You have taken on a difficult task as our Prime Minister in difficult times.

May the spirit of love and justice guide your actions for our country!

Respectfully yours,

Margaret Rao  
President  
Canadian Unitarians For Social Justice  
cusj.org

cc: The Hon. Stéphane Dion, Minister of Foreign Affairs