



Canadian Friends
Service Committee
(QUAKERS)
www.quakerservice.ca

September 23, 2019

Chrystia Freeland,
Minister of Foreign Affairs,
Ottawa, Ontario, K1A 0A6

Re: Refusal to invest in occupation

Dear Minister Freeland,

Greetings from the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) in Canada. For a long time Canadian Quakers have held a concern for the wellbeing of all in Israel/Palestine. Many Friends have visited Palestine/Israel, have spent time learning from people in the region through engaging with Jewish Israelis and Palestinians with many different perspectives, and have documented the deplorable situation they witnessed first-hand.

We are in agreement with the official policy of the government of Canada,¹ and with the international community, that Israel's settlements in the West Bank, East Jerusalem, and the Golan Heights are in violation of the fourth Geneva Convention and among the serious barriers to peace.

As Quakers, we seek to live out the testimonies of peace, integrity, equality, simplicity, community, and unity with creation. For many years we have used investment screens that align our funds as closely as possible with these testimonies.

We are pleased to say that our investment practices have proven sound and it has been determined that neither Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends nor Canadian Friends Service Committee hold any investments in companies that profit from the occupation.² In keeping with our long history of ethical investments, this year at the annual national gathering of Quakers, we formally decided that this remain the case as long as the occupation continues.

¹ Government of Canada, "Canadian Policy on Key Issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict," modified March 19, 2019, https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/israeli-palstinian_policy-politique_israelo-palestinien.aspx?lang=eng

² The investment screen is researched and made available by American Friends Service Committee, "Occupations," <https://investigate.afsc.org/occupations>



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We have previously written an FAQ about why we support a boycott of the products of illegal Israeli settlements,³ and have called for honesty in labeling of illegal settlement products.⁴ We repeat that products must be labeled honestly to allow consumers to make ethical choices. We wholeheartedly agree with Judge Anne Mactavish in her decision in *Kattenburg v. Canada (Attorney General)* that, “Identifying the [settlement] wines as ‘Products of Israel’ is false, misleading and deceptive and interferes with the ability of Canadian consumers to make informed and rational decisions to buy conscientiously.”⁵ We are deeply troubled that the Government of Canada, while acknowledging to the court that West Bank settlements are not part of Israel, is still appealing this ruling.

We remain committed to justice and peace for all and hope that our choice, made with love after years of careful and prayerful discernment, to refuse to invest in an illegal and immoral occupation, will be followed by others of conscience who hold a similar hope for peace.

In Friendship,

Beverly Shepard, Clerk, Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends

Derek Nice, Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee

cc: James Carr, Minister of International Trade Diversification
Prime Minister, Justin Trudeau
Elizabeth May, Green Party
Andrew Scheer, Conservative Party
Jagmeet Singh, New Democratic Party

³ Canadian Yearly Meeting and Canadian Friends Service Committee, “Frequently Asked Questions: Canadian Yearly Meeting’s Positions on Israel / Palestine,” May 13, 2015, <https://quakerservice.ca/FAQ>

⁴ Canadian Friends Service Committee, “Open Letter: Quakers Call for Honesty in Labelling of Settlement Products,” April 19, 2018, <https://quakerservice.ca/HonestyinLabelling>

⁵ quoted in AFP, “No ‘Made in Israel’ Label for Settlement Wines: Canada Court,” *Yahoo! News*, July 29, 2019, <https://news.yahoo.com/no-made-israel-label-settlement-wines-canada-court-191823597.html>



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