

OPEN LETTER TO CBC:

Canadians call for fairness, impartiality, and integrity on Palestine

Mr. Michael Goldbloom,

Chair, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Ms. Catherine Tait,

President, Canadian Broadcasting Corporation

Dear Mr. Goldbloom and Ms. Tait,

As civil society organizations, we recognize the important role CBC plays within Canadian society as our public broadcaster.

However, today we are writing to you deeply concerned with CBC's coverage of Palestine-Israel.

Over the last month, CBC Palestine - a collective of independent organizers, and one of the signatories to this letter - expressed our dissatisfaction with this coverage through grassroots demonstrations at the CBC buildings in Toronto and in Ottawa. Protesters called on the CBC to meet basic journalistic principles of fairness, accuracy, balance, impartiality, and integrity when reporting on Palestine-Israel.

There are a few editorial issues that are particularly troubling for us we must raise with you.

First, we were incensed to find out about CBC's policy of censoring the word "Palestine," and were shocked when anchor Duncan McCue was forced to apologize on air for using the word.

While the CBC language style guide discourages the term "Palestine", this position is not based in international law, and is contradicted by CBC policy regarding other conflicts.

It is well known that the State of Palestine has non-member observer status with the United Nations and is recognized by 138 countries. Moreover, entities such as Taiwan and Somaliland are mentioned in many CBC articles, despite the Canadian government's position that it does not formally recognize either as sovereign states.

Second, we were disappointed that CBC still refuses to cover the recent Human Rights Watch report stating that Israel is committing crimes against humanity of persecution and apartheid. This was a landmark report by one of the most prominent mainstream, international human rights organizations. The report was covered in other international and Canadian press, yet entirely ignored by the CBC.

Third, we are disturbed by the many ways that CBC has been exercising control over journalists' ability to report and speak about these issues. For example, CBC retaliated against journalists who signed an open letter to Canadian newsrooms calling for better reporting on Palestine-Israel, removing them from coverage of the Middle East.

As well, CBC has been discouraging journalists from using the word “Palestine” even in casual conversation, and has put all CBC coverage under strict editorial control, creating a centralized “staff advisory panel” to vet all content and overrule the discretion of its own journalists. These policies restrict the ability of journalists to properly cover the issues and are likely to result in a watering down of reporting.


Let us be clear: we are not asking CBC to take sides on Palestine-Israel. We simply ask that you report the reality on the ground, stop ceding to pressure from lobby groups which seek to censor content sympathetic to Palestinians, and stand up for your own journalists and their expertise.

We believe that fair and balanced coverage will require the inclusion of Palestinian voices in editorial teams, and relying on reporters with knowledge of the region. Canadians need to hear this nuance and context.

As signatories to this letter, and as the protesters highlighted, our demands are as follows:

1. Update your language style guides to reflect international human rights law;
2. Allow the use of the word “Palestine” in broadcasts and digital media, including by CBC journalists;
3. Cover the 2021 Human Rights Watch report on Israel’s crimes of apartheid, as well as similar reports by Israeli rights groups B’Tselem and Yesh Din;
4. End pro-Israel bias and the dehumanization of the Palestinian people by including their voices and perspectives in your coverage.

We look forward to hearing from you in response to this letter and our demands

Sarah Wazzi 

Sarah Wazzi-Moukahal/Radi Shahrouri
CBC Palestine



Michael Bueckert, PhD
Vice President, Canadians for Peace and Justice in the Middle East (CJPME)

The Coalition of Canadian Palestinian Organizations (CCPO)

C.C.

The honorable Steven Guilbeault, Minister of Canadian Heritage

Carmel Smyth, President of the Canadian Media Guild

Jack Nagler, CBC Ombudsman

Endorsed by:

1. CUPE Ontario
2. Canadian Friends Service Committee (Quakers)
3. Independent Jewish Voices Canada
4. Palestinian Youth Movement - Toronto
5. Just Peace Advocates
6. United Network for Justice and Peace in Palestine and Israel
7. Canadian BDS Coalition
8. Canadian Council of Imams
9. Labour for Palestine - Canada
10. Hamilton Coalition to Stop the War
11. Canada Palestine Association, Vancouver
12. Socialist Action / Ligue pour l'Action socialiste
13. Association of Palestinian Arab Canadians – Capital Region (Ottawa CCPO)
14. Association of Palestinian Arabs of Ontario (Mississauga CCPO)
15. Canadian Palestinian Foundation of Quebec (Montreal CCPO)
16. Canadian Palestinian Association of Manitoba (Winnipeg CCPO)
17. Palestinian Association of Hamilton (Hamilton CCPO)
18. Canadian Arab Society of London (London CCPO)
19. Canadian Arab Forum of British Columbia (Vancouver CCPO)
20. Canadian Palestinian Social Association (London CCPO)
21. Palestine House of Toronto (Toronto CCPO)
22. Atlantic Canada Palestinian Society (Halifax CCPO)
23. Canada Palestine Cultural Association (Edmonton CCPO)
24. Palestinian Association of Brantford (Brantford CCPO)
25. Canadian Palestinian Council (Mississauga CCPO)
26. Palestine House Association (Calgary CCPO)
27. Human without Borders (Hamilton CCPO)
28. Canadian Palestinian Research Center (Toronto CCPO)
29. Canada Palestine Cultural Foundation (Ottawa CCPO)
30. Run For Palestine (Edmonton CCPO)
31. Ottawa Run For Palestine (Ottawa CCPO)
32. Run For Palestine (Calgary CCPO)
33. Jerusalem Social and Sports club (Toronto CCPO)
34. Run For Palestine (London CCPO)
35. Muslim Association of Brantford
36. Justice for All Canada
37. Canadians United Against Hate
38. Ottawa Forum on Israel Palestine
39. KW Palestine
40. Free Palestine Halifax
41. Palestine Solidarity Committee Saint John
42. Free Palestine Online (@freepalestine.online)
43. Canadians, Arabs and Jews for a Just Peace (CAJJP)
44. The Association of Palestinian Arab Canadians /Ottawa

45. Academics for Palestine-Concordia University
46. Niagara Movement for Justice in Palestine-Israel (NMJPI)
47. Truth on Palestine
48. Palestine Solidarity Network - Edmonton
49. Calgary Almahdi Centre
50. Muslim Students' Association, University of Calgary
51. Muslim Students' Association, University of Ottawa
52. University of Ottawa Students' Union executive
53. Bilal Islamic Centre
54. INSAF — Integrity Not Spite Against Falastin
55. Calgary Immigrant Support Society
56. People for Peace, London
57. Canadian Boat to Gaza
58. Horizon Ottawa
59. The Ummah Organization
60. Quran Club Toronto
61. The Ottawa Black Diaspora Coalition
62. SNMC South Nepean Muslim Community
63. Canadian Palestine Research Centre
64. GT4BDS
65. CD4HR-Canadian Defenders For Human Rights
66. The Montreal Global Shapers Hub