

Francois-Philippe Champagne
Minister of International Affairs

January 24, 2019

In 2009, a policy statement by Canadian Yearly Meeting of the Religious Society of Friends (Quakers) on Advocacy for Peace in Israel and Palestine included the following:

As a people of faith, we challenge all people, and particularly people of faith, not to put their trust in tanks or bombs or military aggression, but to open themselves to the Spirit of Love which counsels a path of nonviolence. Such a path recognizes the dignity of all peoples and seeks solutions to international conflicts through just and peaceful means.

As Quakers, we reject the use of military force and violence by state or non-state actors. We believe that strategies of nonviolence are the only ethically sound, and ultimately more successful, strategies for overcoming oppression.¹

In light of that belief, we were heartened to hear that the Canadian government supported a United Nation resolution affirming the right of the Palestinian people to self determination. We want to thank you.

However, we were then disappointed and a little confused to learn that on Nov. 15, 2019 (i.e., the same month) Canada voted against or abstained from no less than eight other resolutions related to Palestinian rights.

Canadian policy regarding the Israel/Palestine conflict includes recognition of the Palestinian right to self determination.² It also states that settlements are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention and “constitute a serious obstacle to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace.”³

Despite this, the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement (CIFTA) lacks any regulation to ensure settlement goods are excluded or even accurately labeled regarding origin. Canada also has:

a particularly close military relationship with Israel. This includes both countries purchasing large amounts of military equipment from each other, and a formal agreement, the Canada-Israel Strategic Partnership, mandating ongoing military and defence material cooperation and joint training, as well as maintaining ‘Military Attaché Offices’ in both countries. ... The Canada

¹ <https://quakerservice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2011/05/CYM-Policy-Statement-on-Israel-Palestine.pdf>

² <https://undocs.org/A/C.3/74/L.58>

³ https://www.international.gc.ca/world-monde/international_relations-relations_internationales/mena-moan/israeli-palistinian_policy-politique_israelo-palestinien.aspx?lang=eng

*Pension Plan Investment Board invests in companies directly involved in militarism, including benefitting from the illegal occupation of Palestinian land.*⁴

We welcome Canada's reaffirmation of the Palestinian right to self determination signaled by Canada's support for the resolution (A/C.3/74/L.58). However, we urge Canada to take practical steps in support of the resolution and Canada's own policies. Accurate labeling of settlement goods and an examination of ethical concerns related to the investment of Canada Pension Funds are two significant steps that could be taken. We also repeat our call on Canada to abide by its obligations under the Arms Trade Treaty by ceasing to sell arms to countries, including Israel, that may use these arms in violation of international law or to repress civilian populations.

In Friendship,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Lana Robinson". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Lana Robinson,
Clerk, Canadian Friends Service Committee

⁴ <https://quakerservice.ca/wp-content/uploads/2016/11/20161126-Minute-on-Canadas-involvement-in-the-arms-trade.pdf>