



United Network for a Just Peace in Palestine & Israel (UNJPPI)
212 Summit Drive
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Office of the Prime Minister
80 Wellington Street
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Dear Prime Minister:

We write seeking your intervention with Prime Minister Netanyahu to reverse Israeli plans to forcibly transfer thousands of Palestinian Bedouins out of their communities in the central part of the occupied Palestinian territories and into a designated township.

As you are aware, the forcible transfer of an indigenous population is a grave breach of the Fourth Geneva Convention (GCIV). Canada as a high contracting party to the Convention and a strong supporter of the rule of international law and as Israel's "best friend" has the opportunity to use the relationship which you have fostered to persuade Israel to reconsider this illegal and immoral action.

Several reputable international organizations on the ground believe Israel will use the land which Bedouins have inhabited for countless generations to expand illegal Israeli settlements. The plans include moving Bedouins out of the politically sensitive E1 area where Israel has long-intended to demolish 23 Bedouin villages in order to expand and link settlements previously established in violation of international law. Settlement expansion in this area would effectively cut the West Bank in two, further disrupting movement and social and economic ties between major Palestinian cities and limiting the little access Palestinians in the West Bank have to Jerusalem. This would constitute a form of collective punishment - yet a further breach of GCIV. Additionally, it would render irreparable damage to the possibility of the two-state solution.

In recent months, the government of Israel has used coercive tactics to heighten the pressure on Palestinian Bedouin communities, issuing eviction orders and demolishing homes and livelihood structures.

Israel has obstructed aid agencies from delivering assistance to these communities, including by seizing and destroying emergency shelters that international donors provided for families whose homes were demolished. Israeli officials have gone so far as to confiscate a swing-set and a slide from a Bedouin school.

Israel has already demolished more than 350 Palestinian homes or livelihood structures in Area C in 2014. Demolitions in the Jerusalem periphery and E1 area have hit a five-year high, displacing 170 Bedouins, 91 of whom are children.

These forms of collective punishment are not only illegal under GCIV but they are immoral and seriously jeopardize peace in the region.

Mr. Prime Minister, you have apologized to Canadian First Nations for the sins of past governments. Part of the legacy we have inherited as a nation is the Reserve system and all of its inherent problems of which you are well aware. You have recently returned from your annual tour of the Canadian Arctic. The nomadic life style of our Innu and Inuit closely resembles that of the Bedouin of Palestine. Subsequently, you can understand how forcing the Bedouin off of the land they have inhabited for centuries and into a township is a sin and a singularly foolish act. We implore you to contact Prime Minister Netanyahu to tell him of the long term systemic problems created in Canada by forced relocation of our First Nations long years ago. Please urge him to consult with the Bedouin to develop a long term relocation program perhaps allowing some to return to the Negev where they were forced out shortly after the establishment of the state of Israel.

Recently, your government has taken a strong stand on the need to respect international law and territorial integrity with respect to the Ukraine. We ask if you are prepared to apply the same standard in dealing quickly with our Israeli friends and requesting they cancel this illegal and immoral plan? If you are not prepared to act on this request, will you please provide your rationale regarding why international law is sacrosanct with some countries and not with Israel which purports to be a liberal democracy?

Sincerely,

Rev. Steve Berube
Co-chair: UNJPPI

Rev. Marianna Harris
Co-chair: UNJPPI

cc: Thomas Mulcair
Justin Trudeau
Elizabeth May
Claude Patry