



Canadian Arab Federation  
La Federation Canado-Arabe

May 22, 2007

Hon. Stéphane Dion,  
Leader of the Opposition,  
House of Commons,  
Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0A6

Dear Mr. Dion:

While you may feel that your participation in the 59th anniversary celebration of the founding of Israel falls in line with your efforts to reach out to the many diverse groups that make-up our great country, we feel it is necessary to point out that we, as Canadians seeking justice and peace must not ignore the fact that this same anniversary means something entirely different to another group of people.

The creation of Israel was a catastrophe (Nakbah in Arabic) for the indigenous Palestinian population. By participating in an event that celebrates that catastrophe you disregard and thereby treat as insignificant the profound pain and suffering that numerous Canadian citizens of Palestinian origin have experienced, a pain that endures. This insensitivity ill-suits you or anyone else wishing to be seen as a person who can represent all Canadians.

Regrettably, the dispossession of Palestinian homes, land and livelihood did not end with the creation of Israel. Israel's conquest of the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem, its 40 years of continuous occupation of these territories and its current intensified siege of the people in those territories cry out for a just resolution in accordance with international law.

Mr. Dion, we ask that you consider the price you are paying in the mistaken belief that courting powerful interests will bring your party money and power. A study sponsored by the Canada Israel Committee shows that:

- 89% of Canadians believe both sides in the conflict share equal blame and 83% insist on Ottawa remaining neutral on the issue,
- the more Canadians become familiar with the conflict, the more they tend to sympathize with the Palestinians.
- 32% of those surveyed believed Ottawa favoured Israel while 4% felt their government tilted to the Palestinians.

*This poll was conducted in November 2004, before the Lebanon war which laid bare Israel's aggressive policies to many Canadians.*

*A BBC globe-spanning survey released in March 2007, in which more than 28,000 respondents in 27 countries were asked to rate 12 countries, found that Israel has the most negative image of all those countries in that it is viewed negatively by 56 percent of all respondents and positively by only 17 percent.*

Many who support justice for Palestinians were pleased when you were elected as leader of the Liberal Party. We hoped that you would move the party away from Paul Martin's clear favouritism of Israel and back to a stronger



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stand in favour of international law. This has not happened and many supporters of justice for Palestine are very disappointed.

We are aware of the dynamics within the Liberal party that led to your election as leader. We know that many Canadians from all backgrounds were drawn to you and Mr. Kennedy because MPs like Omar Alghabra and Borys Wrzesnewskij and Colleen Beaumier who supported you and Mr. Kennedy shared our vision of justice and peace for the Middle East.

Mr. Dion, we have a few questions to ask you. Will you:

- state that you are in favour of ending the embargo on the Palestinian Authority Unity government?
- press the government to support UN Resolutions condemning Israel's aggression towards Palestinians?
- support the ruling of the International Court of Justice regarding the Segregation Wall built on Palestinian land?
- state clearly that Israeli settlements in the West Bank and East Jerusalem are a violation of international law and should be removed?
- state clearly that Canada abides by Article 13 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights that affirms that "everyone has the right to leave any country, including his own, and to return to his country."?
- support the call by Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel for a multicultural state and the abolition of all discriminatory laws?

We would be most grateful if you could find some time in your busy schedule to meet with a small delegation from some of the organizations that are signatory to this letter so that we may discuss how we can work with you in support of these issues of human rights and international law.

Respectfully,

Canadian Arab Federation (CAF)  
Canadian Islamic Congress (CIC)  
ADALA, Canadian Arab Justice Committee, Vancouver  
Al Ansar Islamic Center of Toronto  
Al-Huda Lebanese Muslim Society, Toronto  
Brampton Coalition for Peace and Justice, Brampton, ON  
Canada Palestine Association, Halifax  
Canada Palestine Association, Vancouver  
Canada Palestine Support Network, Calgary  
Canada Palestine Support Network, Ottawa  
Canadian Palestinian Foundation of Quebec, Montreal  
Canadian Syrian Cultural Club, Toronto  
Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East, Montreal  
Centre de ressources sur la non-violence, Montreal  
Educators for Peace and Justice, Toronto  
El-Hidaya Association, Montreal  
Gerald and Maas, editions / atelier, Ottawa



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Islamic Ahlul Bayt Assembly of Canada, Richmond Hill, ON  
Islamic Foundation of Toronto, Toronto  
Islamic Society of York Region, Richmond Hill, ON  
Jewish Alliance Against the Occupation, Montreal  
Jewish Women's Committee to End the Occupation, Toronto  
Jews for a Just Peace, Vancouver  
Journal ElRessala, Montreal  
Mississauga Coalition for Peace and Justice, Mississauga, ON  
Moroccan Association of Toronto, Toronto  
Near East Cultural and Educational Foundation (NECEF), Toronto  
Niagara Coalition for Peace, St. Catherines, ON  
Niagara Palestinian Association, St. Catherines, ON  
Not In Our Name, Toronto  
Palestine Community Centre of British Columbia, Vancouver  
Palestine House Cultural and Educational Centre, Mississauga, ON  
Palestinian And Jewish Unity (PAJU), Montreal  
Salaheddin Islamic Centre, Toronto  
Solidarity for Palestinian Human Rights – University of Ottawa, Ottawa  
Taric Islamic Centre, Toronto  
The Muslim Service, Toronto  
The Nile Association of Ontario, Toronto  
The Syrian Arab Association of Canada, Ottawa