

October 17, 2017

Dear Minister,

When I was in Palestine and Israel four years ago as a human rights observer, I quickly determined the best way to introduce myself to most others was to say, "Hi, my name is Steve Berube. I am a Canadian and I would like to apologize about my government."

Many Israelis, Palestinians and internationals asked me what had happened to the Canadian government. They asked, why was our government so pro-Israel and anti-Palestinian in comparison to our traditional role as honest broker? Why had Canada fallen out of step with European nations and turned a blind eye on Israeli violations of human rights and the rule of international law with respect to Palestine? I was ashamed of how the previous government had abandoned our traditional diplomatic position rooted in John Peters Humphrey and Lester Pearson. This led me to apologize for Canada when I introduced myself.

Sir, I need to apologize to you and through you to foreign affairs officials. An erroneous report in the Jerusalem Post led me to believe that you met with an Israeli cabinet minister in occupied East Jerusalem. I was pleased and relieved to learn that the meeting occurred inside of the internationally recognized borders of Israel.

I reacted harshly and should not have relied on a single media report. I apologize for my criticism.

My initial reaction was rooted in the reality that many Canadians and I hoped your government would revert to a more balanced position vis-a-vis Palestine and Israel.

There is some evidence that your government's position is slightly more balanced than the previous.

1. Your government restored 2/3rds of the funding that had been cut by the Harper government.
2. Currently, the Minister of Foreign Affairs usually offers a helpful reiteration of the overall Canadian policy that we desire a just peace for Palestinians and Israelis. Yet, in comparison to European and Nordic states, your government very seldom holds Israel to account in public for its ongoing violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention when reported in the media.
3. The true mark of Canada's position is how we vote in the UN General Assembly. Last year, Canada along with: the Federated States of Micronesia, Marshall Islands, Nauru, Palau, United States and Israel were the only nations that voted against motions calling Israel to account for its violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention. (There is widespread speculation that the four island nations cast their votes against Palestine because of chequebook diplomacy.)

Again, I offer my sincere apology for my comments that were incorrect. Also, I want to indicate that I am appreciative that you and the government are more sensitive to the optics of meeting in occupied Palestinian territory in contrast to John Baird.

I still look forward to your response to two of the three questions I asked:

- Does your government reject the concerns of the Security Council outlined in SC 2334?
- As Minister of Public Safety, believe we actually have anything to learn with respect to public security from the only nation in the world that prosecutes 12 year old children before Military Courts?

Peace, Paix, Salaam, Shalom,

Rev. Steve Berube

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