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May 12, 2015

The Hon. Stephen Harper  
Prime Minister of Canada  
Office of the Prime Minister  
80 Wellington Street  
Ottawa, ON K1A 0A2

Fax: 1 613 941 6900  
Email: pm@pm.gc.ca

Dear Prime Minister Stephen Harper,

Greetings in Christ from The United Church of Canada.

This letter comes to you with concern in light of responses from our government to the article by CBC journalist Neil Macdonald (“Ottawa cites hate crime laws when asked about its ‘zero tolerance’ for Israel boycotters,” May 11 2015, CBC)<sup>1</sup>.

The United Church seeks to live into a vision of Canada as a just society within a caring world, expressed in active, thoughtful involvement in society. This is reflected in the church’s commitment to working with others seeking peace with justice in Israel and Palestine. This work is rooted in the gospel mandate to be peacemakers and in response to the calls of Palestinian and Israeli partners to join them in working toward a just peace for both peoples.

The United Church is not advocating a boycott of Israel; our economic action campaign against goods produced in illegal Israeli settlements in the occupied Palestinian territories is one piece within a broader program of prayer, partnership, and trust-building efforts. The church’s actions are consistent with our understandings of the shared value Canadians have for the democratic right of freedom of expression. The United Church of Canada stands in solidarity with groups and individuals exercising this right in non-violent, peaceful ways.

The CBC story picks up on concerns in the larger Canadian context about a growing climate of fear and possible infringements of democratic rights through recent legislation. Public Safety Minister Steven Blaney has said that the concerns raised in the CBC article are “inaccurate and ridiculous.” However, coupled with comments made by the Minister himself at the United Nations in New York, and by his office in response to a request for clarification as to the meaning of “zero tolerance,” we believe that Canadians need clear reassurance from our government.

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<sup>1</sup> “OTTAWA CITES HATE CRIME LAWS WHEN ASKED ABOUT ITS ‘ZERO TOLERANCE’ FOR ISRAEL BOYCOTTERS,” NEIL MACDONALD, CBC, [HTTP://WWW.CBC.CA/NEWS/POLITICS/OTTAWA-CITES-HATE-CRIME-LAWS-WHEN-ASKED-ABOUT-ITS-ZERO-TOLERANCE-FOR-ISRAEL-BOYCOTTERS-1.3067497](http://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/ottawa-cites-hate-crime-laws-when-asked-about-its-zero-tolerance-for-israel-boycotters-1.3067497), ACCESSED MAY 12, 2015.



We welcome your response, and pray for you and all political leaders as you carry out your duties and responsibilities in public service.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Gary Paterson" followed by a horizontal line extending to the right.

The Right Rev. Gary Paterson

Moderator

The United Church of Canada/L'Église Unie du Canada

c.c.     The Honourable Thomas Mulcair, The Leader of the Official Opposition  
          Justin Trudeau, MP, Leader of the Liberal Party of Canada  
          Elizabeth May, MP, Leader of the Green Party of Canada  
          Louis Plamondon, MP, Acting Leader of the Bloc Québécois in the House of Commons  
          The Honourable Robert Nicholson, Minister of Foreign Affairs  
          The Hon. Steven Blaney, Minister for Public Safety