

MPs VISIT
TO
PALESTINE AND
ISRAEL

REPORT PUBLISHED BY:

THE CANADA-PALESTINE
PARLIAMENTARY
FRIENDSHIP GROUP

March 30- April 06, 2018

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The Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship Group

June 2018

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FOREWORD

June 20, 2018

Ottawa, ON

The Members of Parliament who travelled to Israel and Palestine would like to sincerely thank Ambassador Nabil Marouf and his staff for their tireless efforts in helping organize a very substantive, educational and powerfully informative trip. Long hours and extensive meetings with key groups would not have been possible without the Ambassador and his staff's leadership. Special thanks to volunteers Nina Amrov, Farah Albarahmeh and Radi Shahrouri for their assistance.

We would also like to express our thanks to the Palestinian Authority for their fantastic hospitality and gracious welcome during our brief, but memorable stay.

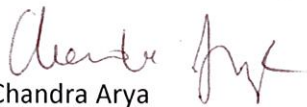
We are grateful to the Representative of Canada to the Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot for his contribution to our trip. Your service to Canada and wealth of experience was evident on our trip. You have helped members of the group understand Canada's involvement in the region and have remained a true advocate for Palestinians living in the West Bank and Gaza.

We would like to thank the Canadian Palestinian Foundation of Quebec (CPFQ) and their donors, without whose generous donations this trip would not have been possible. We are grateful for your continued support in building bridges between Canada and Palestine and for changing the lives of children living under occupation. You are making a large impact on Palestinian society, one child at a time.

We would like to recognize the department of Global Affairs Canada for their important role in briefing members prior to the trip and assisting us logistically. We thank you for facilitating our efforts to see, firsthand, the issues facing the region.

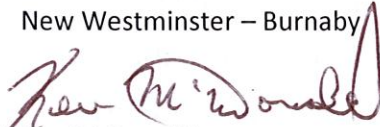
To all Palestinian and Israeli individuals, organizations, NGOs, UN Officials, lawyers and advocates who met with us during our trip, we stand proudly with you in your struggle for attainment of peace and stability. We salute your bravery and resilience for not only standing up for a righteous, but just cause for Palestinians.


We heard your testimonies and as members of this group, we will not forget the words you spoke in defense of human rights and justice. We applaud your strength and continued advocacy. Here in Canada, we will continue to advocate for a peaceful resolution to a conflict that has gone on for far too long.


Chandra Arya
Member of Parliament
Nepean


Ruth Ellen Brosseau
Member of Parliament
Berthier – Maskinonge


Peter Julian *M.K.*
Member of Parliament
New Westminster – Burnaby


Ken McDonald
Member of Parliament
Avalon


Marwan Tabbara
Member of Parliament
Kitchener South – Hespeler


Mario Beaulieu
Member of Parliament
La Pointe-de-l'Île

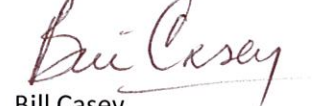

Guy Caron
Member of Parliament
Rimouski-Neigette – Témiscouata

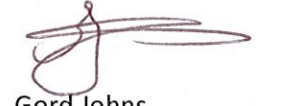

Don Davies
Member of Parliament
Vancouver Kingsway


Irene Mathyssen
Member of Parliament
London – Fanshawe

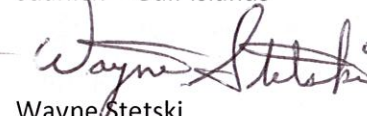

Robert Falcon Ouellette
Member of Parliament
Winnipeg Centre


Alexandre Boulerice
Member of Parliament
Rosemont – La Petite-Patrie


Bill Casey
Member of Parliament
Cumberland – Colchester


Gord Johns
Member of Parliament
Courtenay – Alberni


Elizabeth May
Member of Parliament
Saanich – Gulf Islands


Wayne Stetski
Member of Parliament
Kootenay – Columbia

RECOMMENDATIONS

WHEREAS we support the peaceful resolution of all issues between the peoples of Israel and Palestine, unconditionally condemn violence on all sides, and firmly subscribe to the goal of establishing secure, sovereign states for each.

WE RECOMMEND AS FOLLOWS:

RECOMMENDATION #1

That the government should work with international partners to:

- appoint a Special Envoy to promote, monitor and report on the human rights situation of Palestinian children living in the Palestinian territory, specifically undertaking an evaluative analysis to Israeli military law and practice as they affect Palestinian children in the West Bank by reference to the standards of international law and international children's rights;
- take concrete steps to promote greater respect for human rights and increase protections for Palestinian children;
- hold Israeli military authorities accountable to their obligations under international human rights law and international humanitarian law.
- Keep working to encourage all parties to take necessary diplomatic efforts to achieve a just and lasting peace for Palestinians and Israelis.

RECOMMENDATION #2

That the government continue and increase its financial assistance to UNWRA and spearhead an effort among international partners to assist UNWRA financially.

RECOMMENDATION #3

That the government use all available diplomatic efforts, including votes at the United Nations, to bring about a halt to Israeli settlement construction in the Palestinian territories.

Mission Details

From March 30 through April 6, 2018, 18 Members of Parliament, including at least one member from each of the five political parties represented in Parliament, visited Palestine and Israel.

Purpose

The visit to Palestine and Israel was aimed at allowing participants to learn more about the situation in the region through meetings with Israeli and Palestinian officials. It was designed to provide an opportunity to have a deeper insight into the political, social, health, education, economic and legal conditions. The trip focused on gaining firsthand knowledge and understanding of the region which could prove helpful when brought back to Canada by Parliamentarians.

Funding and Participation

Except for two tickets paid by two participants themselves, air tickets were fully funded by the Palestinian community in Canada. The Palestinian Canadian community organized fundraising events in several cities across Canada. Donations from the Palestinian community were collected by the Canadian Palestinian Foundation of Quebec (CPFQ). The community was able to provide sufficient funds to cover the cost of air tickets for parliamentarians. Spouses, friends or family members who accompanied us were responsible for the cost of their own tickets. Following arrival, the Palestinian National Authority provided accommodation and hosted us in both Bethlehem and Ramallah.

Context

This trip comes in light of the reformation of the Canada-Palestine Parliamentary Friendship group and some contextual factors and developments, the most influential of those being:

- 1) Canada's policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is in opposition to permanent Israeli control over occupied territories and to the construction of the barrier in the West Bank and East Jerusalem by Israel. Canada supports a resolution of the Israeli – Palestinian conflict that must be rooted in international law, including the Fourth Geneva Convention, which was applied to the occupied Palestinian territories in 1967.
- 2) Canada resumed funding to the budget of UNRWA in amounts of \$25 million and \$10 million in emergency funding for Palestinian refugees

- 3) Aside from the visit of Canada's Governor General, no political visits between Canada and Palestine had taken place since 2015.
- 4) The chief representative of the Palestinian General Delegation in Canada extended an invitation to Canadian parliamentarians to visit Palestine as guests of the Palestinian Authority.

The Members of Parliament Who Travelled to Palestine and Israel

Initially, 33 parliamentarians expressed an interest in the trip, 22 of whom initially confirmed their participation. Four of those had to withdraw for various exigent circumstances, in the result that 18 Members of Parliament participated.

The final list of participating parliamentarians:

- 1- Chandra Arya (Ontario: Nepean; Liberal)
- 2- Mario Beaulieu (Québec: La Pointe-de-l'Île; Bloc Québécois)
- 3- Alexandre Boulerice (Québec: Rosemont — La Petite-Patrie; NDP)
- 4- Ruth Ellen Brosseau (Québec: Berthier — Maskinongé; NDP)
- 5- Guy Caron (Québec: Rimouski-Neigette — Témiscouata — Les Basques; NDP)
- 6- Bill Casey (Nova Scotia: Cumberland — Colchester; Liberal)
- 7- Shaun Chen (Ontario: Scarborough North; Liberal)
- 8- Don Davies (British Columbia: Vancouver Kingsway; NDP)
- 9- Garnett Genuis (Alberta: Sherwood Park — Fort Saskatchewan; Conservative)
- 10- Gord Johns (British Columbia: Courtenay — Alberni; NDP)
- 11- Peter Julian (British Columbia: New Westminster — Burnaby; NDP)
- 12- Irene Mathysen (Ontario: London — Fanshawe; NDP)
- 13- Elizabeth May (British Columbia: Saanich — Gulf Islands; Green)
- 14- Ken McDonald (Newfoundland and Labrador: Avalon; Liberal)
- 15- Robert-Falcon Ouellette (Manitoba: Winnipeg Centre; Liberal)
- 16- Wayne Stetski (British Columbia: Kootenay — Columbia; NDP)
- 17- Marwan Tabbara (Ontario: Kitchener South — Hespeler; Liberal)
- 18- Geng Tan (Ontario: Don Valley North; Liberal)

PLACES VISITED: WHAT WE SAW AND HEARD

3.30.2018 We departed Toronto Pearson Airport to travel to Tel Aviv, Israel

03.31.2018 We arrived at Ben Gurion Airport and were received by representatives of the Canadian embassy in Tel Aviv who escorted us to Bethlehem, in Palestine. In Bethlehem, we were provided accommodation at the Hotel of the Presidential Palace. We were received by the Governor of Bethlehem, Major General Jibril al-Bakri, the Mayor of Bethlehem, Anton Salman, the representative of Bethlehem, Mr. Fayez El Sakka, Ambassador Nabil Marouf, and the representative of Canada to the Palestinian National Authority, Mr. Douglas Scott Proudfoot.

At lunch, we were briefed on the most recent developments, maps and information on settlements, the Separation Wall and Jerusalem.



In the afternoon, we visited the Church of the Nativity and met with Palestinian dignitaries and representatives of the Antiochian, Greek, and Armenian Orthodox churches. We toured the church.



After this meeting, the delegation made its way through narrow winding streets to the Hosh Al-Syrian guesthouse, a restored Ottoman Empire building (circa 1729), overlooking the old town, which is a UNESCO World Heritage Site.

The owner, Fadi Kattan, is a dual French-Palestinian citizen, a chef and entrepreneur who left Paris to come back home to Palestine. To run his business Fadi has to purchase water from the settlers because they have control over the natural springs. He explained to us that he has to buy water at triple the cost of what a settler would pay for his or her water, an expense which limits the growth of the business. He also described the difficulty of getting furniture deliveries through the checkpoints.

We also met with four Palestinian NGOs in the fields of education, development, human rights and the empowerment of women.

We concluded our first day with dinner hosted by the Governor of Bethlehem, Major General Jibril Bakri.

04.01.2018 Hebron: The next morning, en route to Hebron, the Negotiations Support Unit provided us with extensive information on the roads, settlements, land confiscation, administrative and security divisions in the territories. In Hebron, we were received by Mayor Tayseer Abu Sneineh. We visited the Hebron Rehabilitation Committee and heard a presentation about the impact of the occupation and its practices on the city of Hebron in all aspects of life, including the economy, culture and construction. We saw photos illustrating the dramatic changes in the features of parts of the city caused by Israeli settlements. Following the presentation, we toured the old city and visited a glass and ceramics factory.

There are multiple barriers maintained by the Israeli military and many important sites are surrounded by walls, barbed wire and checkpoints. The turnstiles are similar to those found in major

subways that have floor-to-ceiling metal spokes do not usually have barbed wire.

There are numerous high-tech cameras to view individuals who appear at the first set of gates. At the gates, a signal light comes on, indicating permission to push the gates open, allowing individuals to enter. Once through the first set of barriers, the soldiers await individuals at the entrance of every building.



We had originally planned to visit the Ibrahimi Mosque but we waited for at least one hour at the checkpoint to gain access to the tomb of Abraham. Our group was turned away without any explanation ever having been given. Despite this arbitrary exclusion and the missed opportunity, the delegation managed to experience a glimpse of life under occupation, where discrimination and restriction runs rampant, with no reasons given.

Instead, we entered a settler community where the delegation went through yet another floor to ceiling ringed steel-walled checkpoint. Parliamentarians saw firsthand the highly secured settlement community in the heart of Hebron. About a dozen Israeli Defence forces (IDF) were present with heavy armour. Up and down the roads are large bus-like trucks with tractor wheels transporting settlers from one location to another. Also, heavily armed riot vehicles can be seen

driving up and down the roads monitoring the streets and the settler community. Members of the committee observed one settler man with a firearm placed between his lower back and belt. A young Palestinian resident explained to us the routines of her daily life and her daily struggles. Violence, racism and, far too often, deaths have gone unpunished in the close quarters with settler communities. Hebron, Members heard, is where the occupation is felt most, and where many of the injustices towards Palestinians, unfortunately, continue to this day. We took a tour of Al Shuhada Street which runs through the settlement and beyond. Non-resident Palestinians are not permitted to use the street.

The Governor of Hebron Kamil Hameed hosted us at lunch.



Beit Jala: We then departed en route to Bethlehem, but, before arriving there, we stopped at Beit Jala where and listened to a lengthy explanation from the Negotiations Support Unit and the St. Ives, which is the Legal Section of the Latin Patriarchate of Jerusalem. We saw firsthand expansions of settlements. A young lawyer presented information about the settlements and her struggle to conduct court challenges to the illegal expansion on Palestinian territory.

Applications to Israeli courts to block the establishment of new settlements or the expansion of existing settlements have been unsuccessful. We viewed maps and pamphlets illustrating how the occupation, through its settlement arm and its illegal settlements have confiscated more than two-thirds of the land of the Beit Jala area. We saw the roads, highways and mountain tunnels built by the occupation on Palestinian land, on which Palestinians are not allowed to travel. We also heard from the residents about the situation in this area, specifically, the settlement of Gilo and Crimson Valley "Wadi Krimsan".

Bethlehem: We visited the Walled-off Hotel located next to the separation wall and the hotel's exhibition, which was opened by the British graffiti artist Banksy. Immediately across the street, blocking the view for hundreds of metres in both directions, is the wall. It is one of the many walls built throughout the Occupied Territory to prevent Palestinians from walking or driving into areas where Israelis have established zones to exclude Palestinians.

One Member of Parliament spoke with German visitors taking pictures by the graffiti wall. The German visitors said "It's a shame that societies are still building walls to separate people, we as Germans know this all too well."

We were then hosted to a dinner reception with Mrs. Abeer Odeh, Minister of the Palestinian National Economy, at which the Governor of Bethlehem, the Mayor of Bethlehem, a large number of Palestinian business people, members of civil society were present, as well as Douglas Scott Proudfoot, Canada's representative to the Palestinian National Authority.

04.02.2018 On our third day we moved from Bethlehem to Ramallah, where we stayed for the rest of our visit. On our way from Bethlehem to Ramallah we stopped to visit a Bedouin community.

Al-Baba Mountain: 'Abu Nuwwar' Bedouin community that is located near Ma'ali Adumim, an Israeli settlement in the so-called E1 area. At Abu Nuwwar, we listened to a presentation on the Israeli settlements and plans to annex E1. Abu Nuwwar is near the settlement of Ma'ale Adumim, which is an urban Israeli settlement and a city in the West Bank, seven kilometers from Jerusalem. The Negotiations Support Unit provided detailed information about the danger of this settlement and its expansion and the E1 project. The E1 project aims to sever the West Bank and segregate the city of Jerusalem from the rest of the surrounding Palestinian cities. E1 is where Israel plans to build a settlement on the Bedouins' land. This would lead to the expulsion of this traditional nomadic community. This region is particularly important for Palestinians as it ensures the congruity of the West Bank, including East Jerusalem. A wall is also in the works, although the construction is at a halt at this time. The construction can be re-launched at any time, threatening the existence of the Bedouin community.

Arriving at Al-Baba Mountain we met a Bedouin community who are facing expulsion from Palestinian lands. There are 3500 Bedouins under the threat of eviction. The delegation heard testimony from resident "Attallah" living in this area where the residents spoke of the occupation practices directed against the Bedouin population and the continuous attempts to uproot them from the area.

The Bedouin population is afraid to move to another area in search of water in fear that they might not be able to return again to "Jabal Al-baba". The Bedouin must truck water in because they are afraid to leave their lands in search of food and water.

Attallah told the MPs about the situation of bypasses built to connect settlements together which threatens the existence of the Bedouin community. He said that Bedouins suffer from constant harassment by settlers and the State of Israel. Since 2004, there is only one road that goes in and out of Jabal Al-baba, land that was given to the Vatican by the King of Jordan in the late 1950s. In the last 4 years, 53 structures have been destroyed. In 2017, a daycare was destroyed.

Raids can happen anytime and this affects the lives of women, children and all members of the community.

Jerusalem: We then departed for Jerusalem where we were given a tour inside the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, a tour in the Old City that included lunch and shopping breaks and a tour Inside Al- Aqsa compound. We also met with a number of clerics.

Ramallah: Arriving in Ramallah we checked into our hotel and then went to the Ministry of Foreign Affairs where we met with Minister of Foreign Affairs and expatriate, Dr. Riad Malki. Dr. Malki expressed his deep appreciation for our visit, but expressed frustration with the inadequacy of international partners' efforts to move toward a negotiated resolution leading to peace for the region.

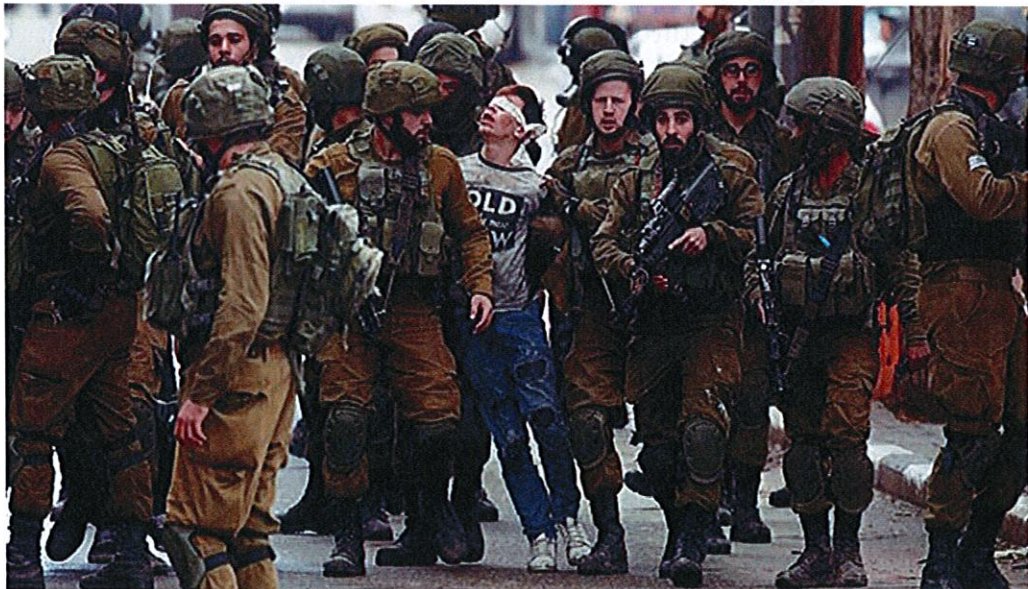
Later that evening we visited the Mahmoud Darwish Museum. At the museum, we were received by the Minister of Culture, Dr. Ihab Bseiso. Minister Bseiso discussed Palestinian culture and the importance of culture as a path of resistance to the occupation of the Palestinian people.

Finally, at the Cultural Palace, we attended a Palestinian cultural night, which included many cultural and folk performances. Apart from a cultural presentation of folkloric dancing, there was a presentation of a video on a school that was recently built in Bethlehem.



MP Robert-Falcon Ouellette performed a ceremonial Cree drumming. Our group was invited to the stage. The event concluded with recognition of families of those killed by the IDF, families of imprisoned Palestinians, community committees that organize peaceful protests and prominent women in the community.

04.03.2018 Ramallah: We started the day by visiting the headquarters of the Palestinian Red Crescent Society where we were briefed on the situation of Palestinian children, with a focus on children in Israeli military custody. A presentation was given by Mr. Ivan Karakashian, Advocacy Unit Coordinator, Defence for Children International – Palestine, which advocates for children's rights in Palestine. Mr. Karakashian presented many details and different examples of the psychological trauma Palestinian children are exposed to at an early age. During late night raids into their homes, children are arrested, blindfolded and restrained, and taken to military bases, where they are without access to counsel, parents or guardians and are often coerced to give inculpatory statements, confessing to throwing stones. This causes severe psychological trauma because, as is the case with most children, their sense of security comes from relying on their parents as their guardians and protectors. When that image is shattered, they are left constantly worried about their safety.



The group also had the opportunity to hear directly from a former child detainee and his lawyer. We listened to the details of the arrest

of 16-year-old Fawzi al-Junaidi, who spoke about the details of his arrest in his home city of Hebron. He was arrested, blindfolded, restrained and taken into detention by a large group of Israeli soldiers. He talked about the injuries he suffered, being deprived for food and water for more than 36 hours, verbal abuse and threats of worse treatment if he does not confess.



Following this, we visited Al Jalazoun Refugee Camp and visited the Jalazoun Girls School, which is attended by about 900 students. It is located near the Jalazoun Boys School, which has more than 1,000 students. The schools are quite near an Israeli military post that protects a settlement which is a few hundred meters away. These and other details were addressed by the staff of the UNRWA, who briefed the delegation on the services provided by the Agency to the students and the camp. They noted that the next summer the agency may be unable to provide any services because of the fiscal deficit due to the withdrawal of American funding. We met with a number of students who identified themselves as representing the student council of the Girls School. They spoke of many difficulties and challenges as well as their dreams and aspirations.

We then met with the Popular Committee in Jalazoun refugee camp. They discussed the difficulties faced by the camp and its residents, and about the most important needs and projects that can reduce the suffering of the people of the camp.

We met with Minister of Foreign Affairs Dr. Riad Malki, followed by lunch with members of the Palestinian Legislative Council, Dr. Nabil Shaath, Dr. Abdullah Abdullah, Mr. Bernard Sabella, Mrs. Najat Al-

Astal and Mrs. Sahar Al-Qawasmi. Dr. Nabil Shaath spoke about the aspirations of the Palestinian people for better relations with Canada and about Canada's ability to play an important role in the peace process.

Our group then visited the headquarters of Palestine Television, where we met the Director General and a number of departmental directors, and were briefed on details related to the professional work provided by the Palestinian Broadcasting Corporation, as well as the challenges for journalists working in Palestine.

We then visited the tomb and museum of Yasser Arafat in Ramallah. At the museum we met with Bassem al-Tamimi, the father of Ahad al-Tamimi, who has been jailed by the Israeli military court. She was sentenced to 8 months in prison, 4 months of which she had still to serve. Mr. Al-Tamimi spoke about his family's history of resisting the occupation.

Our day concluded with a working dinner with the Supreme Presidential Committee of Churches, and a number of representatives of the Christian communities in Palestine.

04.04.2018 Ramallah: We visited the Palestinian civil police headquarters in Ramallah to tour the latest state of the art forensic laboratory, provided by an \$11 million grant from Canada. The laboratory is focused on crime – drugs, violence, and forensics. According to our host, Palestinian Chief of Police Major General Hazem Attallah, there is no organized crime in Palestine. Palestinians are not allowed to have guns and murders are solved quickly as they are virtually always crimes where the victim and murderer were known to each other and the larger community. The Chief would like to have DNA testing available to pursue cases of sexual violence, but that is not yet available to them.

They have an excellent working relationship with the Israeli police who assist in addressing crimes that involve Israeli citizens and Palestinians.

He also mentioned that when settlers accidentally end up in Palestinian neighbourhoods the Palestinian Police force will ensure the settlers' safe return to his or her neighbourhood.

Despite the good will, the Israeli police have not been successful in getting the Israeli military to allow the Palestinian police force quick passage across checkpoints, although they have tried. It is the Israeli military and not the police who control the day to day lives of the Palestinians. The local Palestinian police have to wait at the checkpoints just like everyone else. Some days they are turned away. The Police Chief joked that he was lucky that Palestinian criminals wait at the scene of the crime for the hours that it takes the Palestinian police to reach them.



We then visited the modern and newly developed city of Rawabi which is 20 minutes outside Ramallah. To date, the construction of this city has cost about \$1.3 billion. This city represents another means of Palestinian resistance. Built near the settlement of Ateret, it is intended to serve middle class Palestinians by providing competitive prices and affordable payment plans. In the city of Rawabi, there are now about 4,000 residents, with a city designed for a population capacity of 25,000. A modern, British-based Cambridge school has

been established and launched for the first time in Palestine. This smart city also offers many of the most modern features and facilities including entertainment options, such as the largest open-air concept theater in the Middle East, with a more than 15,000 person capacity. At the end of the tour, the delegation met with Mr. Bashar Al-Masri, the owner of the Rawabi project. Mr Al-Masri spoke about the national goals behind the establishment of such a project. He also talked about the obstacles and difficulties that the occupation created during the construction project which almost bankrupted the entire development.

The city of Rawabi is a great example of a well-functioning city and institutions. This city model is a great step forward in displaying well-structured and safe cities in a future Palestinian state.

After leaving the city of Rawabi, we made our way to the headquarters of the Palestinian Presidency and met with President Mahmoud Abbas. President Abbas presented the Palestinian vision in regards to the peace process and final status issues. The President emphasized the importance of an immediate peace resolution to the ongoing conflict that has caused much suffering on both sides. Immediate peace is needed in order to alleviate the continued suffering of Palestinians, and to ensure a prosperous future for generations to come.



During the meeting with H.E. President Mahmoud Abbas, he emphasised a number of points. First, the Palestinian leadership found that peace was a strategic choice. No matter what the conditions, the Palestinian leadership will not allow violence to escalate. When the Palestinian leadership accepted to provide numerous concessions and fulfilled their commitments towards peace, the Israeli side did not display any commitment. Thus, the absence of a serious partner in Israel led to this long halt in the peace process. Second, settlements are considered the most dangerous element which jeopardizes the future of a two-state solution. The Israeli government insists on expanding existing settlements and building new ones. This is a clear violation of international law, international legitimacy and international consensus against settlements. Third, Jerusalem is part and parcel of Palestine and the U.S. declaration of Jerusalem as the capital of Israel disentitles the U.S. from acting as a mediator between Palestine and Israel. Fourth, and bearing in mind all of the above, it becomes evident that engaging with international organizations and seeking the support of other nations and governments are the remaining options to keep the chances of making peace alive. President Abbas reiterated that he still wishes that Canada would play a role in ending this conflict and help in making peace a reality.

We then visited the headquarters of the Canadian Representative Office to the Palestinian National Authority where we learned about the nature of the work of the Office and the assistance and projects funded by the Canadian Government, including the Hebron Courthouse project. Briefings were provided by the Representative of Canada, Douglas Scott Proudfoot, and by Brigadier General Conrad J.J. Mialkowski – Commander, Operation PROTEUS.

MPs Boulerice, May and Tabbara were interviewed by Palestinian Broadcasting.

To end the day, we attended a reception organized by the Canadian Representative Office. We were joined by Palestinian ministers, officials, diplomats and businesswomen and men. Also represented

where Palestinian private sector organizations: Paltrade and Global Palestine, Connected Palestine.

04.05.2018 Jerusalem: On the second-to-last day of our trip, we went to the Western part of Jerusalem for half a day, and had meetings with: the Israeli organization "Breaking the Silence Foundation"; Israeli Knesset member and head of the Arab Joint list Ayman Odeh; the Israeli institution B'Tselem; and, had a working lunch with the Parliament of Peace, which is a platform for a number of Israeli former ministers and members of Knesset.

Breaking the Silence Foundation

We began our morning by meeting with Israeli organization, "Breaking the Silence Foundation". Breaking the Silence is an organization of veteran combatants who have served in the Israeli military since the start of the Second Intifada. They have been bravely taken it upon themselves to expose to the Israeli public the reality of everyday life in the Occupied Territories. Breaking the Silences endeavors to stimulate public debate about the price paid for a reality in which young soldiers face a civilian population on a daily basis, and is engaged in the control of that population's everyday life. Its work is aimed at bringing an end to the occupation. Soldiers who serve in the Territories witness and participate in military actions which change them immensely. Nightly raids and disturbances of Palestinian homes are continuously carried out, particularly in Hebron. Testimonies portray a different, and much grimmer picture in which deterioration of moral standards finds expression in the character of orders and the rules of engagement, and are justified in the name of Israel's security. While this reality is known to Israeli soldiers and commanders, Israeli society continues to turn a blind eye, and to deny that what is done in its name. Discharged soldiers returning to civilian life discover the gap between the reality they encountered in the Territories, and the silence about this reality they see at home. In order to become civilians again, soldiers are forced to ignore what they have seen and done. Breaking The Silence strives to make the voices of these soldiers heard and pushes Israeli society to face the reality of the creation it has enabled. The organization collects and publishes testimonies from soldiers who have served in the West Bank, Gaza and East Jerusalem.

It has done this since September 2000, and has held lectures, house meetings, and other public events which bring to light the reality in the Territories through the voice of former combatants. Breaking The Silence also conducts tours in Hebron and the South Hebron Hills region, with the aim of giving the Israeli public access to the reality which exists minutes from their own homes. Yet, this is rarely portrayed in the media. Founded in March 2004 by a group of soldiers who served in Hebron, Breaking the Silence has since acquired a special standing in the eyes of the Israeli public and in the media, as it is unique in giving voice to the experience of soldiers. To date, the organization has collected testimonies from over a 1,000 soldiers who represent all strata of Israeli society and cover nearly all units that operate in the Territories. All the testimonies they publish are meticulously researched, and all facts are cross-checked with additional eye-witnesses and/or the archives of other human rights organizations also active in the field. Every soldier who gives a testimony to Breaking the Silence knows the aims of the organization and the interview. Most soldiers choose to remain anonymous, due to various pressures from official military persons and society at large. Their first priority is to the soldiers who choose to testify to the public about their service.

Ayman Odeh

Our second meeting of the morning was with Israeli Knesset member Ayman Odeh, head of the Arab Joint list, a political alliance of four Arab dominated political parties. MK Odeh spoke about the reality of the lives of Arab citizens in Israel. He also shared disturbing violent stories of confrontations that happen all too often between Palestinians and Israelis. One particular confrontation that he recounted was at a Bedouin village named Umm al-Hiran. This confrontation resulted in Mr. Odeh being shot in the head.

B'Tselem

We then met with the Israeli institution, B'Tselem, which documents the violations of human rights by the Israeli army in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. The Israeli Information Center for Human Rights in the Occupied Territories works to end Israel's occupation in acknowledgment of the fact that ending the occupation regime is the only way to forge a future in which human rights, democracy, liberty

and equality are ensured to all persons living between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea. While it is not B'Tselem's role to choose between the various political options that can bring about this future, one thing is clear: continued occupation is not an option. B'Tselem was founded in 1989 and until recently devoted most of its efforts to documenting human rights violations that come under Israel's purview as occupying power. This included publishing statistics, testimonies, video footage and reports concerning human rights violations and their implications, in order to improve the human rights situation of the occupied population – with the understanding that the occupation was to be a passing matter. Yet after more than half a century of occupation, during which Israel's policies in the Occupied Territories have created profound changes that indicate long-term intentions, it is clear that this reality cannot be viewed as temporary. Therefore, B'Tselem continues to document and publicize human rights violations while also exposing the injustice, violence and dispossession that lie at the very core of this regime of occupation, challenging its legitimacy in Israel and abroad and helping to expedite its end. B'Tselem has established a strong reputation among human rights organizations in Israel and around the world. It has received various awards, including the Carter-Menil Award for Human Rights, together with Al-Haq (1989), the Danish PL Foundation Human Rights Award, together with Al-Haq (2011), and the Stockholm Human Rights Award (2014). B'Tselem's video project was granted the British One World Media Award (2009) and the Israeli Documentary Filmmakers Forum Award (2012), among others. B'Tselem is an independent, non-partisan organization. It is funded by donations alone, from foundations in Europe and North America that support human rights activity worldwide and from private individuals in Israel and abroad.

Parliament of Peace

We ate a working lunch with the Parliament of Peace, which is a platform for a number of Israeli former ministers and members of Knesset. They shared with us their numerous efforts to initiate and promote peace in the region.

Ramallah: Upon our return to Ramallah, we heard a presentation by the secretary of the Committee of the Samaritan Jewish Community, Mr. Latif Latif. Mr. Latif briefed the delegation on the beliefs and rites

of the Samaritan community and affirmed that the community is part of the Palestinian people. Another presentation was given by Mr. Samih Al-Abd, on the project of connecting Gaza to the world through technological projects.

Finally, together with the representative of Canada to the Palestinian National Authority, Douglas Scott Proudfoot, we had a working dinner with the PLO Executive Committee Member Dr. Hanan Ashrawi.

04.06.2018 On our last day, our group departed Ramallah for Ben Gurion Airport in Tel Aviv for flights back to Canada.

The Political Message

The Palestinian leadership consistently conveyed the following political message:

A just, lasting and comprehensive peace is the strategic choice for the Palestinian leadership. This outcome can only be realized by ending the occupation and recognizing the two-state solution, on 1967 borders with minor changes and based on international relevant resolutions, as the only solution for the Palestinian Israeli conflict. The two-state solution is the sole assurance for stability in the Middle East, where the two states Palestine and Israel live side by side in peace and security. East Jerusalem is the Capital of Palestine and shall be an open city for all religions. The Palestinian leadership rejects any unilateral declarations or actions related to the status of the city of Jerusalem; the position that is clearly emphasized by and stated by international legitimacy and UN resolutions. Halting settlements must precede any peace process as they constitute the major obstacle to achieving peace. Violence will not be a Palestinian option under any circumstances. The Palestinian leadership joined international efforts in fighting terrorism and has already cooperated in this field. The Palestinian leadership finds that a multi-lateral international platform would be an optimal choice that can help in negotiations on final status issues (Jerusalem, borders, security, settlements, refugees, water, and prisoners). Negotiations have to be based on international legitimacy, with concrete assurances of the implementation within clear timeframe. Canada among other nations are invited to take part in reviving the peace process; and finally the Palestinian people love, respect and admire Canada's values which must prevail in their struggle against occupation.

ANNEX I: Links

For more information about the city of Rawabi, <http://www.rawabi.ps/>

For more information about the city Hebron, <http://hebronrc.ps/index.php/en/>

Temporary International Presence in Hebron (TIPH), <http://www.tiph.org/>

For more information on Beit Jala, <http://www.beitjala-city.org/index.php/en/events/127-save-the-valley-in-cremisan> and on the Crimson case, <https://www.nad.ps/en/publication-resources/factsheets/israel%E2%80%99s-colonialist-enterprise-and-archeological-excavations>

For more details on the Abu Nuwwar Bedouin community, <https://www.nad.ps/en/publication-resources/maps/palestinian-bedouin-communities-risk-forcible-transfer-eastern-jerusalem>

For more information about the Jalazone refugee camp, <https://www.unrwa.org/where-we-work/west-bank/jalazone-camp>

For more information on forensic science laboratory, <https://www.unodc.org/unodc/en/frontpage/2016/November/first-forensic-science-laboratory-opens-in-ramallah-with-unodc-support.html>

For more information on the Hebron Courthouse project, <http://www.ps.undp.org/content/papp/en/home/presscenter/pressreleases/2017/12/06/ground-breaking-ceremony-for-hebron-courthouse-with-support-from-canada.html>

For more information about UNRWA, <https://www.unrwa.org/who-we-are>

For more information about the centre, <http://www.dci-palestine.org/>

Palestinian Private Sector:

Representatives from Paltrade, <https://www.paltrade.org/>

Global Palestine, Connected Gaza, <http://www.connectedgaza.com/>

For more information about the Al-Haq organization, <http://www.alhaq.org/>

For more information about the Qattan Foundation,
<http://qattanfoundation.org/en>

For more information about the Taawoon organization, <http://www.taawon.org/>

for more information about the Falastiniyat organization,
<http://filastiniyat.org/newsite/>

For more information about Breaking the Silence,
<http://www.breakingthesilence.org.il/about/organization>

For more information about B'Tselem, https://www.btselem.org/about_btselem

For more information about Ayman Odeh:
https://knesset.gov.il/mk/eng/mk_eng.asp?mk_individual_id_t=938

