

April 28, 2010

Via mail and email

Prime Minister Stephen Harper
House of Commons
Ottawa, Ontario
K1A 0A6

Dear Prime Minister Harper:

On behalf of the 54,000 members of the Canadian Union of Postal Workers, I am strongly urging you to block Israel's membership to the Organization for Economic Co-Operation and Development (OECD) until it complies with international law and OECD standards.

Israel was formally invited to join OECD in May 2007 with the condition it meet a set of criteria, including respect for human rights, commitment to peace and democracy, and conformity with principles of the UN. Even though Israel failed all of the requirements above, its accession to the OECD has proceeded to the final stages. Israel is closer than ever to being accepted into the OECD. The Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW) believes that granting I Israel membership in the OECD amounts to ignoring Israel's complete disregard of international law.

The OECD demanded that Israel carries out a number of reform measures in its labor market as a condition for membership. A November 2009 OECD report stated:

"Israel has enjoyed strong economic growth over the last decade, but the benefits of this are being distributed unevenly. Poverty rates are higher than in any OECD country, which reflects the deep social and economic divides in Israeli society. On one side, there is the general Jewish population with poverty and employment rates similar to those of OECD countries. On the other, there are Arabs and ultra-Orthodox Jews, or Haredim, who have large families, poor educational outcomes and low employment rates. As a result, just over half of Arab and Haredi families live in poverty. Almost half of all children entering primary school in Israel come from one of these two groups, so profound policy changes are needed to prevent future generations of Arabs and Haredim from being scarred by the disadvantages these population groups face today. "

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This gap in economic integration of Palestinian Arab citizens of Israel is the direct result of Israel's institutionalized discrimination based on ethnicity, including about 30 laws that specifically privilege Jews over non-Jews.

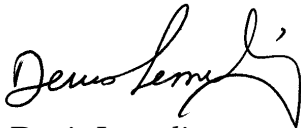
Israel has refused to implement any meaningful reform demanded by OECD. Palestinians working for Israeli employers in the occupied West Bank have no recognized rights under Israeli law, often working without contracts and under duress. According to the ITUC 2009 survey of violations of trade union rights, "Palestinian workers in Israel, even with permits, are hounded by the authorities".

Not only so but according to the OECD, Israel breached a key requirement of membership by including its colonies in the occupied West Bank in its economic report. By accepting Israel, OECD will give the official approval to Israel's illegal occupation and colonization of Palestinian and Syrian territories.

In the Road Map for the Accession of Israel to the OECD Convention, the OECD asks Israel to demonstrate its commitment to "fundamental values" shared by OECD members. Israel responded by continuing to violate both human rights law and international humanitarian law, failing to abide by UN Security Council and General Assembly Resolutions, as well as by the advisory opinion of the International Court of Justice, which calls for the dismantling of the Wall. Furthermore, Israel refuses accountability for its war crimes and crimes against humanity committed during the Gaza invasion last year as documented in Judge Goldstone's report.

It is for these reasons that CUPW is urging you to block Israel's membership into the Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development.

Yours truly,



Denis Lemelin
National President

cc. National Executive Board
Regions and Locals