

Summary of Webinar *

Embracing Responsibility:

Canada's responsibility towards Palestine under international law

Main Information:

- **Date of the Webinar:** 31 May 2023
- **Duration:** 1 hour 35 Minutes
- **Place:** Parliament Hill, Valor Building, 268 - Ottawa || and Online via Zoom
- **Speakers:**
 - Mona Abuamara:** Chief Representative of the Palestinian General Delegation to Canada,
 - Honorable Elizabeth May MP:** GPC Co-Leader,
 - Honorable Mario Beaulieu MP:** BQ Former Leader and President,
 - Honorable Alexandre Boulerice MP:** NDP Deputy Leader,
 - Francesca Albanese:** UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine,
 - Michael Lynk:** Former UN Special Rapporteur on Palestine (2016-2022),
 - Triestino Mariniello:** Legal Team representing Gaza Victims (ICC),
 - Wesam Ahmad:** Director of Al-Haq Center for Applied IL,
 - Neve Gordon:** Professor of IL - Queen Mary University of London,
 - Lara Friedman:** President of the Foundation for Middle East Peace.
- **Moderator:** **Karen Rodman:** Human Rights Advocate - Law for Palestine.
- **Attendees:** 150 (In person and online).
- **Record link:** [Here](#)

*Disclaimer: This document provides a summary of key opinions, positions, and analyses discussed during the session. The views expressed here do not necessarily represent the official stance of Law for Palestine. The organization's objective, through open discussion panels, is to stimulate discourse and enhance understanding of diverse legal perspectives on the subject matter. However, it does not endorse or align with any particular viewpoint.

Introduction

Canada's policy on Palestine-Israel states that "Canada recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination and supports the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic and territorially contiguous Palestinian state" Canada also affirms it "does not recognize permanent Israeli control over territories occupied in 1967." Furthermore, Canada's Approach to Advancing Human Rights clearly states that it "champions the values of... accountable governance" and "has been a consistently strong voice for the protection of human rights". This pledge creates a responsibility, under the premise of equality, toward the rights of the Palestinian people.

Together with the self-declaration of responsibility, there are also consequences that arise for third States in cases of violation of international law, including that of non-recognition of the internationally wrongful act, as stated in article 41 (2) of the "Draft articles on Responsibility of States for Internationally Wrongful Acts": 'No State shall recognize as lawful a situation created by a serious breach within the meaning of article 40, nor render aid or assistance in maintaining that situation'.

Proceeding from this, Law for Palestine, the Palestinian General Delegation to Canada together with the Honorable Alexandre Boulerice MP, Honorable Elizabeth May MP and Honorable Mario Beaulieu MP, members of the Canadian Parliament, would like to invite you attend the event that will be held in-person (with an option to attend online) in Parliament Hill, Ottawa on May 31, 2023 at 12:00 EDT (GMT-4) to discuss the following:

1. The legal situation in Palestine, including Palestinian Self-Determination, and the third state's responsibility including Canada.
2. The Israeli settlement enterprise, annexation, and the Guiding Principles on Business and Human Rights.
3. The Palestinian quest for justice and accountability (ICJ and ICC cases), Canada's stance and responsibility towards the situation and ending the occupation.
4. Canada's responsibility when it comes to the chilling effect of the IHRA working definition on antisemitism.

Speakers' Interventions

Introductory Remarks:

Muna Abuamara:

Justice and unilaterally pushed peace never bring justice or peace. Palestinians today are the only people who have been chained into appeasing their oppressor. They have been chained using these selectively constructed norms that only fit the whitewashing narrative of the occupier, but the danger of that rhetoric is not just that it absolves the free world and the moral and legal obligations it carries with it, and these obligations have been created through the organs through international law, in which Canada was one of the states that created and pushed for it. Today we are trying to ask you to be enlightened on the responsibility of Canada as a third state that very much respects international law and, more so, as a champion for human rights and for a rules-based international law order. The problem nowadays is that the Palestinian struggle is being redefined, and when it is redefined, it loses its essence by equating the oppressor with the oppressed and turning this dilemma into a religious conflict or an ethnic conflict.

So, by being repressive, just mainly by replacing the word Palestine with West Bank and Gaza, it becomes a source of conflict that could be solved as equal sides that are fighting for something that is equal, which is not the case. The Palestinian struggle is against occupation, apartheid, and subjugation and towards justice and freedom that the free world has created a venue for through the organs and international law. So, Canada, our hope is to push past the feeling of having Palestine as the exception to the protection of the rules of international order and Israel as the exception to its obligation. The only way we can achieve that justice is by implementing these laws and rules universally, with no exceptions. Palestine has a voice, and it's amplified by our Arab and Muslim heritage. We have a voice that cannot be replaced. It's a Palestinian voice that needs to be amplified every day while we call for freedom and justice. 75 years is more than enough for a question to not be answered. 75 years is more than enough time for refugees to be in refugee camps. And 75 years is enough for us to tell the oppressed to go fix things with their oppressor without having anyone

push for that oppressor to be obliged to comply with those rules and those values. Because no occupier would ever wake up and decide that they would want to end their occupation on their own. They don't need to. And so is our situation now. So, we would like you to hear everything that those incredible panellists have to say towards our request for answers on what third states need to do, what Canada as a champion needs to do, and what you can carry with you to advocate strongly for Palestine to amplify our voices. Thank you for being here and thank you to all the panellists. I'm really humbled to be part of this experience.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

So, just before we move to our speakers, we have come together to embrace responsibility, in particular Canada's responsibility, towards Palestine under international law. We know that Canada's policy on Palestine states clearly that Canada recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination and supports the creation of a sovereign, independent, viable, democratic, and territorially contiguous Palestinian state. We also know that Canada's policy affirms that it does not recognize permanent Israeli control over territories occupied since 1967. Furthermore, Canada's approach to advancing human rights clearly states that it is a champion of the value of accountable governance and that Canada has consistently been a strong voice for the protection of human rights. But this pledge creates a responsibility under the premise of equality towards the rights of the Palestinian people. So together with self-declaration of responsibility, there are also consequences for third states in cases of violation of international law relating to non-recognition of internationally wrongful acts.

So today, Law for Palestine has brought together an expert panel to consider Canada's obligations, including article 1 of the Fourth Geneva Convention, which requires all high signatories, of which Canada is one, to take action to ensure those violations of the Fourth Geneva Convention do not occur under any circumstance. And so, while we have had parliamentary petitions, and the people that are here with the event have sponsored some of those and other actions that have spoken to this accountability over the years, follow-through often has not aligned with the concrete actions, even in support of Canada's own policy on international law and sometimes even our own domestic law.

Honorable Elizabeth May MP

I'm really honored to be here with everyone, and I won't take much time to say that we're here, obviously in support of asking Canada to do more to recognize our responsibility towards the Palestinian people. As her excellency just stated so clearly: when one party is occupied and the other party is the occupier, it's not as if you have two parties and should just get along. Canada has an obligation to stand up for the rights of the Palestinian people to ensure that the state of occupation ends as soon as possible and that there'll be justice and peace for both the people of Israel and for Palestine. The dwindling prospects of a two-state solution do not perish with a whimper because the countries that could make a difference ignore the situation of the settlement project and the reality of the illegal dispossession of Palestinian People from their land.

Honorable Alexander Boulerice MP

Thank you, Karen. And hi, everybody. I'm really happy to be here with you. I'm speaking in English because I was supposed to translate for my good friend Mario, but basically, we are saying more or less the same thing. What we are experiencing right now with Palestinian rights is a completely unacceptable situation that we do not support in any other region of the world. It's really strange and weird when it comes to Israel and Palestine that the sense of values of the western world and democracies are changing. Regarding what's going on in Ukraine or in any other region of the world, such as Myanmar or others such as Sudan, we will have certain expectations from western states, and when it comes to Palestine, any such evidence is going away. And it was a crisis when I was a baby, and 50 years later, it's still a crisis, and we are not doing enough. And like Mario said, the official position of the federal and Canadian governments is quite clear. We just have to do it. We just have to implement it. We just have to be serious about it and voting accordingly in the United Nations, which we're not doing right now, with the liberal government or the conservative government before. International law is clear, and the official position of the Canadian government is clear, our position as parties are clear, and we have to act together to make sure it is respected to help Palestinians who

are suffering right now on the ground, losing their villages, their farms, their trees, and their lives. So, we have to be serious, and this is why I'm going to be a little bit partisan here, why the NDP (New Democratic Party) is proposing to stop selling arms to Israel until it stops its illegal occupation of Palestine and has a mandatory labelling of goods produced in the illegal colonies and illegal settlements? At least the consumers will have the choice to buy these products or not.

It has because those illegal actions from this extreme right-wing Netanyahu government must have consequences. Otherwise, they will continue to do it and take the lands of the Palestinians. So, we have to work together. But I also don't want to take too much of your time because I'm not an expert and we're here to listen to them. But thank you for coming, everybody. Merci.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

Merci to the three MPs. Thank you so much for joining in with your comments. So, the first speaker is Francesca Albanese. She is an Italian international lawyer and academic, but at the present time she is the current United Nations special rapporteur on the situation of human rights in the Palestinian territory since 1967. She'll be speaking about the advancement of self-determination for the Palestinian people and, in particular, the responsibility of the United Nations and member states, which of course would include Canada, as we've just been speaking about. So, I will turn it over to Francesca. Welcome.

Speakers' Interventions

Francesca Albanese

Thank you very much. Good morning, honourable members of parliament and colleagues. Bonjour, I wish to express my gratitude to the organisers of this important event, in which I'm very honoured to participate. I would like to reflect with you on the responsibility of the United Nations member states to realize the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people, to which I dedicated my first report to the UN General Assembly last October. I decided to focus on the right of self-determination because this right is foundational, both as a right enshrined in the UN charter and often referred to in the political discourse and is still both unrealized and gravely misunderstood. Self-determination

is the right of a people to determine their political status and pursue their economic, social, and cultural development independently, free from alien domination and control.

In essence, this is the right to exist and live freely as a people. Israel's over half a century-old military occupation irredeemably violates the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people in what remains of Palestine in the West Bank, including East Jerusalem and the Gaza Strip. And it does so in four ways:

First, through infringement of territorial sovereignty, which Israel violates by fragmenting, seizing, and annexing the occupied territory, forcing its population into segregated and isolated landscapes, and transferring Israeli civilians into it, creating colonies. This is profoundly illegal because colonies, under international law, constitute a war crime.

Second, sovereignty over natural resources, which are necessary to develop an independent economy, which Israel violates by extracting and exploiting Palestinian resources in the land that it unlawfully seizes in order to generate profits, benefiting third parties, including the illegal settlers. As settlement products are the outcome of the commission of a war crime, third states are de jure banned from trading and marketing them, and doing otherwise makes them complicit. Facilitating the imports through free tariff agreements, for example, as Canada does, adds a layer of illegality.

Third, the cultural existence of another people, which Israel violates by appropriating, erasing, and suppressing symbols of Palestinian identity, including Palestinian history from school curricula, and the destruction and appropriation of religious and cultural sites and symbols. The recent ban on the display of the Palestinian flag, categorised as a symbol of terrorism, speaks volume to this.

Last but not least, the formation and expression of political will. This is the beating heart of self-determination, which Israel violates by interfering with the formation of a Palestinian politic as epitomised by the persecution of any political religious leaders, student activists, and even reputable Palestinian human rights organisations that have recently been labelled as terrorists.

This engineered violation of the right of self-determination, accompanied by the logic of displacing the native population and replacing it with illegal settlers, is the hallmark of settler colonialism. Now,

Canada is globally known for its emphasis on equality and human rights because of it, but also because of Canada's ongoing process of reckoning with its own legacy of settler colonialism and reconciliation with its indigenous peoples, I trust Canada can play a critical role in reorienting the political discourse and participate in what I call the paradigm shift that is very much needed towards Israel and Palestine. These hinges on the establishment of the primacy of international law without exceptions and without double standards. I, therefore, ask you to consider the following three recommendations that I made last year to all UN member states:

First, the end of Israel's illegal occupation cannot be made contingent on negotiations. This is not an intractable conflict, but it's an oppressive and acquisitive settler colonial project of which the occupation, the military occupation, is a vehicle, and apartheid is an inescapable consequence. So, the realization of the right of self-determination of the Palestinian people must be a precondition to any politically negotiated solutions.

Second, owing to the peremptory character of the right of self-determination, there are Erga Omnes obligations on third states, obligations that third states cannot avoid. This means that states cannot recognize as lawful and aid or assist the negation of these rights. Rather, they should do their utmost to ensure its realization, including resorting to economic, political, and diplomatic countermeasures as afforded by the UN Charter.

Third, accountability for possible war crimes and crimes against humanity in the occupied Palestinian territory should be pursued not only through the ongoing ICC investigation into the situation in Palestine but also through universal jurisdiction.

In conclusion, Canada is a country that has started to acknowledge past wrongs as a first step to correct them. As the UN has finally decided to commemorate the Nakba on its 75th anniversary, I say commemorating without consequences is meaningless. It is time for principled action in the interest of both the Palestinians and Israelis and the hope for a peaceful future for both.

Thank you. Merci beaucoup.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

Thank you so much, Francesca. We next turn to Michael Lynk, who is also online. Michael would've liked to have been able to join us here but was not able to due to circumstances.

Most of us know Michael fairly well. He's a Canadian associate professor at Western University of Ontario in London, Ontario, and the former United Nations Special Rapporteur on the Human Rights Situation in the Occupied Palestinian Territory, serving from 2016 to 2022.

Michael will be examining the legal foundations and implications of the prolonged Israeli occupation and Canada's roles and responsibilities in that regard.

Prof. Michael Lynk:

Thank you to the organizers of today's event on Parliament Hill for inviting me to speak. It's a great honour to be included among this illustrious panel of presenters and among several Canadian parliamentarians. And I truly hope that the remarks and observations offered today by the presenters will push Canada's policies and practices towards the Israeli occupation of Palestine towards a more just and more effective approach to addressing one of the world's longest-running injustices. In his 2020 presidential memoirs, *A Promised Land*, Barack Obama wrote that, "just about every country in the world considered Israel's continued occupation of the Palestinian Territories to be a violation of international law." And he went on: "As a result," Obama said, "our diplomats found ourselves in the awkward position of having to defend Israel for actions that we ourselves opposed. US officials also had to explain why it wasn't hypocritical for us to press countries like China and Iran on their UN human rights records while showing little concern for the rights of Palestinians." When I read this observation, I thought that it also perfectly captured Canada's milk toast approach towards the 56-year-old Israeli occupation of Palestine. This approach by Canada has contributed to Canada losing its last two bids for a UN Security Council seat and to a record of opposing rather than supporting the substantial body of international law that proclaims the illegality of Israel's forever occupation. Let

me speak for a moment or two on the significant gap between promise and performance in Canada's policy towards Israel and Palestine.

First, in terms of promise, and as Karen has already mentioned, since the mid-1990s, the Canadian government has adopted a working formula on the Israeli occupation of Palestine that formally acknowledges the application of international law to the conflict. The formula recognizes Israel's right to security, the Palestinian right to self-determination, the global consensus around a two-state solution, the centrality of UN Security Council Resolution 242, which prohibits the acquisition of territory by war by force, and the right of Palestinian refugees to a just solution grounded in international law. It states that Canada will not recognize Israel's unilateral annexation of East Jerusalem nor Israel's permanent control of the Arab, including Palestinian Territories, occupied since 1967. And the formula deems the Israeli settlements not only to be a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention but also to constitute a serious obstacle to just and lasting peace.

Taken together, this Canadian formula should set the stage for a robust critique of Israel's conduct, as its calcifying occupation has become indistinguishable from annexation and colonialism in East Jerusalem and the West Bank. And its comprehensive and medieval blockade of Gaza since 2007 has resulted, according to the United Nations, in an unlivable reality.

Yet Canada's performance is something else when you measure its formula against Canada's timid voting record at the UN General Assembly on the occupation, its pattern of silence in the face of the deepening occupation, its unwillingness to insist even upon minimum human rights and legal standards respecting the occupation when it renegotiated the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement in 2018, its diplomatic laryngitis after Israel announced its plans to annex significant parts of the West Bank in 2020, and its refusal to make public statements in support of Palestinian and Israeli human rights organizations who are under constant attack by successive Israeli governments. Canada, I think we can conclude, has preferred the path of least resistance. It is easier, it would appear for Canada to proclaim its support for the substantial body of international law as it applies to the Israeli occupation and then disregard it in practice, than to deny it in principle.

The issue that I want to quickly address today in examining Canada's policies and practices towards the Israeli occupation are the Israeli settlements—the approximately 300 Israeli settlements in East Jerusalem and the West Bank, home to 730,000 Israeli settlers. The Israeli settlements are the engine of the occupation. It's its tool to transform the demography of East Jerusalem in the West Bank by creating a sufficiently critical mass of Israeli civilians in the occupied territory, such that it would be politically impossible for any future Israeli government to remove them. Thus, setting the stage for Israel's 1980 de jure annexation of East Jerusalem and the increasingly imminent formal claims for parts or all of the West Bank.

The disfiguring human rights impact of the settlements upon the Palestinians in East Jerusalem and the West Bank has been regularly reported by a range of international institutions and human rights organizations. Indeed, what country would move more than 10% of its majority population into occupied territory, spend billions of dollars housing them, build an extensive road network for settler-only cars, create industrial parks, and provide a massive security network if it did not intend to remain permanently? The only credible explanation for Israel's continuation of the occupation and its thickening of the settlement regime is to enshrine its sovereign claim over parts or all of the Palestinian territory, a colonial ambition par exemos.

The settlements are clearly illegal under international law. The UN Security Council and the UN General Assembly have repeatedly stated this, and they are also war crime on the, under the 1949 Fourth Geneva Convention and the 1998 Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court. And Israel has defied every one of the seven UN Security Council resolutions and the 164 UN General Assembly Resolutions on the settlements. But, and this is the key point, the settlements are also a war crime under domestic Canadian legislation. Given that Canada has enacted into law both the Geneva Conventions and the Rome Statute, Canada repeatedly states that it supports international law and a rules-based international order. Yet what has Canada's practice been on these Israeli settlements? It's been to vote against those resolutions at the UN General Assembly, and perhaps most tellingly, the single strongest point is that when Canada renegotiated the Canada-Israel Free Trade Agreement in 2018 and 2019, it retained the provision for the 1998 original free trade agreement that extended

free trade rights to the goods and services produced in the Israeli settlements to allow them to come into the Canadian market tariff-free. What it should have been doing instead, to be consistent with both international law and domestic Canadian law, is to ban all settlement goods and services from the Canadian market.

A foreign policy grounded in human rights and international law, democracy, and a rules-based international law order, as the Canadian government repeatedly states, is ultimately tested not by the eloquence of its proclamations but by the gritty amelioration of the human condition that it seeks to transform. Indeed, the question of Palestine has become a daunting litmus test for the efficacy of Canada's foreign policy.

A middle power which identifies with a rules-based international order would've long ago concluded that Israel was insincere in seeking to end its forever occupation. That middle power would've drawn the necessary lessons from Israel's ardent refusal to accept the application of the Fourth Geneva Convention, the many unfulfilled Security Council and General Assembly resolutions, and the immutable facts on the ground. Such a middle power would've recognized the grossly asymmetrical balance of power on the ground and would've sought to reward not the occupying power, which has annexation in its sights, but instead to aid the subjugated population, whose quest for freedom on its own land has been perpetually thwarted. It would've been concluded that the Israeli leadership will not alter its defiant course unless and until the international community, acting in common, imposes an escalating economic and political cost on Israel for its occupation's continuation. Only a foreign policy anchored in the realism of these irreducible facts but hope to match the aspirational reach of its proclaimed commitments.

Thank you very much.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

Thank you so much, Michael. Next, we will turn to Triestino Marinello, who is a member of the legal team representing Gaza victims before the International Criminal Court, and also a senior lecturer in

law at Liverpool John Moore's University. He will be speaking on the ICC, the progress, the implications, and in particular Canada's role in ensuring accountability. And we'll just take a moment to switch over the room.

Triestino Marinello

Good afternoon, everyone. First of all, I wish to thank Law for Palestine for the invitation to such an interesting event. It's a great honour to be with you today as a legal scholar for 15 years who has been researching the role of international criminal law within the context of armed conflict or military occupation.

Since 2020, I've also had the honour of representing the victims from Gaza before the ICC. Today I've been invited to discuss the progress and obstacles related to the ICC investigation in Palestine. And then I will also provide some critical reflections on the Canada's approach to the Palestine situation before the ICC. The Israeli-Palestinian setting is one of the most documented contexts for serious violations of international law that may amount to war crimes and crimes against humanity without any intent of being exhaustive for a matter of time. I'm not only referring to the settlement construction, the creation of two separate legal regimes in the West Bank, one for settlers and one for Palestinians, the excessive use of force by Israeli security forces against Palestinians, the widespread targeting and destruction of civilian infrastructure, and intentional military attacks against civilians in Gaza, but I also refer to arbitrary forms of detention, the use of interrogation techniques that may amount to torture, and the deportation and forcible transfer of Palestinians.

It's important to stress that it took 12 years for the ICC to start an official investigation. In March 2021, the former prosecutor, Fatou Bensouda, opened the investigation, which covers alleged war crimes committed by Israeli authorities but also by members of Palestinian armed groups during the 2014 military operation Protective Edge and also alleged Israeli war crimes against Palestinians demonstrating in Gaza during the so-called Great March of Return. Finally, the investigation covers settlement construction in the West Bank as a war crime. As legal representatives of victims, we

raised our concerns on the narrow scope of the investigation because it excluded the long list of alleged war crimes and crimes against humanity perpetrated by Israeli authorities against Palestinian civilians.

The lack of any references to crimes against humanity reveals that the investigation overlooks the overall context in which the most serious violations of international law take place. And the context here is constituted by the legal occupation itself, both in the West Bank and in the Gaza Strip, which amounts to a widespread and systematic attack against civilians as required by the definition of Crimes Against Humanity. However, despite the number of scope of the investigation, the prosecutor's decision was welcomed with huge enthusiasm by victims, as the ICC is the only instrument of justice available to them.

Palestine is indeed unable to prosecute Israeli nationals, while Israeli authorities are unwilling to generally investigate Israeli officers, as widely reported by UN Commissions of Inquiry. Putting an end to impunity in this context is not only a fundamental right of victims but also a duty for the court and the international community.

However, since the new prosecutor, Karim Khan, was appointed in 2021, the court has not made any significant progress in this situation. While the same prosecutor has shown the ability of his office to react promptly to the alleged commission of international crimes in other situations, such as in Ukraine, the investigation in Palestine does not seem to be a priority for him so far. The prosecutor has not selected any cases yet and has decided not to allocate any funds to this investigation in 2022. While for 2023, the Palestine situation has received the lowest budget among all the active investigations, one fourth of the funds are allocated, for instance, to Ukraine. At the same time, no investigators have so far visited Palestine or Israel. No investigators from the ICC, of course. Like the situation in Afghanistan, the prosecutor's reluctance to proceed in Palestine appears to be a surrender to the political pressures of powerful countries, particularly the US, but also ICC state parties that have manifested their opposition to the investigation.

Canada, in particular, has objected to Palestine's formal engagement with the ICC for several years. It was the only state that contested the Palestine's Ratification of the Rome Statute in 2015. On one hand, Canada has shown strong commitments to international justice in other situations, such as in Ukraine. It supports the court in Ukraine, which includes also the submission of a referral is loadable. What is questionable from an international law perspective is Canada's clear policy of double standards and selectivity when it comes to international justice, which de facto discriminates against human rights abused based on their nationality. As a state party to the ICC, Canada has a duty to cooperate with the court. This does not only mean to comply with any cooperation request from the ICC, but it also means that Canada must not put in place any action that may obstruct the work of the court. In the Palestine situation, the UN Secretary General and the ICC assembly of state parties, but most importantly, the trial chambers of the ICC, have clarified that Palestine is a state under the Rome Statute. However, even after this decision, Canada continues to issue official statements declaring that it does not recognize Palestine's accession to the Rome Statute. This conduct might amount to a breach of its duty of cooperation with the court. As it hampers the work of the court by exercising unnecessary and undue pressure on an issue that has already been settled after long-lasting deliberation and a widespread debate in the Hague.

To conclude, Canada, like all other state parties, has the legal obligation to support the court in relation to an investigation that has already been opened. In the Israeli-Palestinian setting, combating impunity could be an important requirement for a peaceful resolution of the crisis. The ICC is not only the sole institution capable of delivering justice to the victims but is also one of the few potentially effective tools for determining war crimes and Crimes Against Humanity, as the most serious violations of human rights and find fertile soil in the climate of impunity enjoyed by the alleged perpetrators of this crimes in this situation.

Many thanks for your attention.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

Thank you so much, Triestino. And now we are going to turn to speakers that are in the room. We're very fortunate to have here with us Wesam Ahmad here from Ramallah, from Palestine, Al-Haq, the original, the first, actually, Palestinian Human Rights Organization. And, in fact, I think the first human rights organization in the Middle East was founded in 1979. Wesam is the director of the Palestinian Human Rights Organization, Applied Centre for International Law, and the coordinator of Al-Haq's Business and Human Rights Program. Wesam will be talking about, the settlements in particular, exploring the legal foundations and Canada's responsibility and business accountability, which would include business accountability for businesses here in Canada as well.

Wesam Ahmad

Thank you, Karen. Thank you to the organizers for inviting me to this event. It's been a long trip, from Palestine to get here, but I'm honoured to be here with you today to share with you the experience and the situation on the ground and what can be done about it, specifically by Canada. And I think it's very important to make the connection that what is happening in Palestine is not disconnected from Canada and its own obligations. But even more importantly, as Francesca mentioned, Canada's own settler colonial history and the importance of embracing that responsibility and taking the responsibilities that Canada has today for its own history of colonialism because if we want to see an exercise of those demons of colonialism, we can't expect to only look at the past while continuing to support a contemporary manifestation of colonialism in the Palestinian present.

This issue is obviously very much on the table today. On the news, there was discussion about the National Anthem of Canada and the modification of the language from 'our native land' to 'on native land'. I think it shows that these past injustices are things that carry forward. There is a strong legacy of colonialism that exists in much of the world. For Palestinians, it is an issue of contemporary forms of colonialism that we are facing today, and it is this practice of colonialism that international law has supposed to have evolved to prohibit its continuation and sees its past actions as reprehensible and

shouldn't be repeated. Al-Haq, as an institution, has used the tools of international law to call for inter-international action to push for an end to the colonization of Palestine and dismantle the apartheid regime that holds it up. When Al-Haq, which is Arabic for the truth, was established in 1979, the institutionalization of the international human rights regime was in its early stages as part of the evolution of the decolonization process, and the work of the organization was aimed at bringing the truth about what was happening on the ground to the international community with the hope that the exposure to the facts as applied to international law would lead to action. However, when that expected action was not forthcoming due to a lack of political will, the organization developed a more proactive approach towards advocating for the enforcement of international law by targeting the political will of the international community and using the mechanisms that have been developed and designated as the legitimate tools through which the pursuit of the right to self-determination should be achieved. With our refinement in the use of these tools, such as the International Criminal Court, the Convention Against Apartheid, and the area of business and human rights, we've been able to challenge Israel's colonial policy by confronting the impunity it enjoys, its narrative of adherence to democratic values in the rule of law, as well as the economic incentive structure facilitating and perpetuating its continued colonisation of Palestine.

Through this work, we have been able to serve as an obstacle to Israel's implementation of its policies, which is why Israel seeks to remove us from the equation, which is a common practice of colonial endeavours. In using the tools that have been designated for people to use in the pursuit of the right to self-determination, we in turn have been designated as terrorists by our Israeli occupying power. However, this comes as no surprise because this is natural in the history of colonialism: trying to challenge and eliminate those that are serving as obstacles to those policies.

The Israeli colonial project has many of the common colonial characteristics, such as supremacy, exploitation, and entitlement, but it also has at least one distinguishing feature: its multinational corporate nature. Unlike the Hudson Bay Company, an English crown-chartered company, Israel has refined the art of colonization and put forward what can be considered the best business practice of colonialism. By incorporating globalization and the free market economy into its colonial enterprise,

Israel has created an economic incentive structure which continues to perpetuate the conflict in order to grow profit. Coupling state policy with foreign direct investment has incentivized both state and multinational corporate actors to benefit from Israel's contemporary colonial enterprise while enhancing the economic absorptive capacity of additional settlers in occupied territory. From the use of tax havens and charitable organizations to exporting its field-tested technology, weapons, and settlement products while attracting tourists from around the world, the Israeli colonial enterprise has developed an economic incentive structure making the international community complicit in its continued colonization of Palestine along business lines at the expense of Palestinian economic development. Israel has also been able to exploit the Palestinian population to secure a captive market for consumption while using that same population as a laboratory for the research and development of weapons and surveillance technology. Technology, which is then marketed and sold around the world, including repressive regimes, as Israeli innovation. Israel's exploitation of the lack of willingness of third states such as Canada to hold it accountable, has not only allowed it to act with impunity but emboldened it to go further. The impunity that Israel continues to enjoy sends a message to states with imperial ambitions that might makes right. And history has shown us that imperial appetites are rarely ever satisfied.

Champions of the rule-based system, such as Canada, must counter this message not only for the question of Palestine but for the international system as a whole. Leaving Palestine as an exception to the universality of the Rights, self-determination threatens to swallow up the rule. It is the responsibility of the international community, especially the high contracting parties to the Geneva Convention such as Canada, to make the cost associated with Israel's imperial ambitions and colonial practices outweigh the benefits it continues to enjoy. Ensuring compliance with international humanitarian law is one of the strongest tools available to you in this regard. Now, a lot of things have been touched upon, specifically what Canada should do, and I don't want to repeat them, but I want to leave with three particular points of importance that address this economic incentive structure:

Exploitation of charitable organizations. The money that flows from Canadian charitable organizations into the settlement enterprise is in the millions of dollars. These taxes could be better

used rather than feed into conflict, and drive the conflict further, and contribute to war crimes. These taxes could be better used to support things like the Canadian healthcare system. Why is it that the Canadian policy of supporting international law would allow for money to leave the Canadian coffers to feed into a settlement enterprise, which it acknowledges and opposes as a violation of international law, while at the same time letting this system continue to fester?

Another example is the role of Canadian companies. Canada has a role to play in regulating the activities of its companies abroad, specifically in situations of conflict in occupied Palestinian territory. When companies are able to invest in occupied territory and make a profit, that feeds into that economic incentive structure. And we can't expect Israel to change its behaviour so long as it is being rewarded for this activity.

And finally, the issue of the trade in settlement products. The idea that the fruits of these settlements can continue to find a market in Canada or elsewhere only reinforces the message that this behaviour is acceptable, feeds into this economic incentive structure, and only encourages further and further settlement expansion. Labelling is not enough. The idea of putting the responsibility on the consumer while at the same time making it difficult for the consumer to take action only traps us in this vicious cycle and only emboldens Israel to continue its practices.

So, in conclusion, so long as the settlement expansion is rewarded with trade, it will be the Palestinian communities that bear the brunt of this vicious cycle. The Palestinian connection to the land is not only essential to our identity; it is also essential to our livelihood and dignity. The Palestinian people don't want a kinder, gentler occupation where they're forced to work on the settlements of their colonizers. They want an end to the occupation and will maintain their steadfastness until they're able to enjoy their rights to self-determination. Canada can choose to be part of the problem or part of the solution.

Thank you.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

Thank you very much, Wesam. And also, I know your focus was on the settlements and mentioning of charities, but a number of complaints that are with the Canada Revenue Agency now also include charitable donations that are going directly through Canadian charities to the IDF, the Israeli Army, as well as to the settlement. So, the Canada Revenue Agency has a number of complaints in that regard as well.

Next, we turn to Neve Gordon, who is also here in the room who's travelled across the pond, as they say, to be with us. He's an Israeli academic and professor of international law at Queen Mary University of London. He also helped found and served as a board member of the bilingual Jewish Palestinian School, Hagar. He will be speaking about unveiling Israeli apartheid. I'm not sure if it needs unveiling really, but Israeli apartheid pillars, significance, and consequences. So, over to you, Neve.

Prof. Neve Gordon

Thank you, Karen. And I'd like to begin by thanking Ambassador Muna Abuamara and Law for Palestine for organizing this important event. It is both a pleasure and an honour to be with you here, and also to the MPs that came here. And I'd like to begin off script by saying something that is probably obvious to everyone in this room, but I think needs to be said: the law is not the solution. And I tell this to my students: the law is not the solution. The law is a tool. The solution will come from these guys, okay? And you need to support them and get more of them so they can bring about the solution. And so, I think we need to understand that and that everything we're saying here, but? To pressure. I like to pressure them; that's our role, so I was asked a few questions, beginning with the pillars of Israeli apartheid and its geographies, and I'd like to tell you the story of how this unfolded.

So, John Dugard—we heard here two Special Rapporteurs—John Dugard was the Special Rapporteur for Human Rights on Palestine in 2007, and he introduced the apartheid accusation within the

United Nations for the first time. But he limited the charge to the territories occupied in 1967, claiming, and I quote, "elements of the occupation constitute forms of colonialism and of apartheid." A decade later, the Special Rapporteur Richard Falk and Professor Virginia Tilly wrote a report for the UN accusing Israel of carrying out the crime of apartheid in all of the territories under its control, and not just those occupied in 1967, while even extending the accusation of the crime of apartheid to Palestinian refugees living in the diaspora. In order to establish that a country is carrying out the crime of apartheid, one has to demonstrate that the racial manifestations of domination are institutional and systematic and that they are created with intention and purpose.

Falk and Tilly first exposed how Israel breached the 1973 International Convention for the Suppression and Punishment of the Crime of Apartheid by putting in place a number of basic laws that institutionalize Israel's regime of racial discrimination against the Palestinian people, and the most obvious one is the law of return, where refugees cannot return to their homeland. And then showed that these laws provide the legal basis upon which Israel carries out policies and practices that entrench Israeli Jewish domination over the indigenous Palestinians. Falk and Tilly's report was a watershed. Two years later, a coalition of Palestinian organisations, including Al-Haq, submitted a shadow report to the United Nations Committee on the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, laying out the charge that Israel was perpetrating the crime of apartheid. By 2021, the Israeli Human Rights Organisation B'tselem joined alongside Human Rights Watch and published reports echoing the same accusations, and in 2022, Amnesty International joined them as well.

Now, I'm not going to enter what it means or how this manifests itself. All the apartheid reports focus on the legislative and executive branches and how they create the apartheid regime. I actually want to talk about the limitations of these reports and why they're not good enough. My claim is that if we want to understand how Israeli apartheid operates, we need to also look at the important role of civil society, both the Israeli civil society, by which I mean organizations like NGO Monitor and Regavim, but also the transnational civil society, where in the United States it might be Stand With Us, and here in Canada, there are several other organizations. And these actors facilitate and enhance Israel's crime of apartheid. The remit is extremely broad, ranging from streamlining education in a way that

corresponds with the Zionist colonial project, enhancing state branding and cultural diplomacy so as to present Israel as a thriving liberal democracy, lobbying politicians, governments, and an array of public and private institutions, and influencing public opinion through different kinds of advocacy. Still, other groups participate in the surveillance of Palestinians and pro-Palestinian actors and take part in land-grabbing endeavours like the JNF (Jewish National Fund of Canada) while also suing activists who support the Palestinian cause. Most of these actors have offices and official charity status, paid staff publications, and websites, and they play a crucial role in enabling Israeli apartheid. They are apartheid enablers. So the geography of apartheid encompasses the territory from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea and includes the Palestinian diaspora that is prohibited from returning to their ancestral homeland, while its pillars include not only the basic laws and governmental policies that enable the domination of one group over another but also an array of civil society actors that manufacture consent for the Apartheid Project, both within Israel and in North America and Europe.

I was then asked about the framework of apartheid, its significance and what it represents in terms of international law, as well as what are the implications and consequences of recognizing apartheid. Apartheid actually is not the best conceptual framework for understanding Israel and Palestine since settler colonialism offers a much more nuanced lens for making sense of the history, power relations, and objectives of the Israeli regime. However, unlike settler colonialism, apartheid provides us with a robust legal framework, allowing us to frame Israel's laws, policies, and practices as criminal. And this in turn, can be used as a tool to mobilize civil society and governments to demand meaningful social change. Indeed, the fact that Israel is carrying out the crime of apartheid not only gives legitimacy to the BDS campaign but also renders BDS a necessary strategy for those who are committed to non-violence and care about enhancing social justice in the region.

Finally, I was asked about the Canadian entities that bear responsibility for supporting Israeli apartheid and about the international ramifications that could arise from backing an apartheid regime abroad. Now, I'm no expert on the Canadian entities, but it is obvious that the Canadian government can do much more to hold Israel to account. And, no, I'm not talking here merely about

reprimanding Israel for its racist laws and policies but also through restrictions on trade. Canadian civil society groups that enable Israeli apartheid should be stripped of their charity status, and pressure must be put on pension funds so that they are compelled from divesting from Israeli apartheid. But Canadians should also keep in mind what Israel is now selling to the world. People constantly decry Israeli military and homeland security exports, and I understand there's a big export exhibition now of military products just outside, not least its surveillance technologies that the Toronto Citizens Lab have exposed. Yet, I think that even more dangerous than these is the kind of democracy that Israel espouses and continuously strives to legitimize. I'm referring here to apartheid democracy, a type of democracy that provides all the basic human rights to one ethnic group, the group that I belong to, while denying these very same rights to another ethnic group so as to enhance social domination. This model of democracy celebrated by Israel is extremely dangerous, not least because right-wing leaders in several countries would like to emulate it. Here I'm thinking of Trump's United States, Modi's India, and Orban's Hungary. Indeed, Israel's brand of apartheid democracy has potentially far-reaching implications for the USA and Canada and therefore must be rejected in a court. I will stop here, and I'm happy to answer later on questions.

Thank you.

Karen Rodman (moderator)

Thank you very much, Neve. In terms of our public pensions here, there are a dozen companies on the UN list that are in the Quebec pension, and about \$14 billion. And, last year, the results haven't come out for the Canada Pension Plan, but it was approaching 7% of the total plan in companies that would be complicit with Israeli war crimes, including those on the UN list and others that are supported by Who Profits, and the American Friends Committee investigates tools and other independent tools. So, I just threw that in to give a bit of Canadian context if you need point.

Our last speaker is Laura Friedman. Again, we will be going back online for those in the room. Laura is the President of the Foundation of Middle East Peace, a leading authority on the Middle East with

particular expertise on Israel and Palestine, and Former Officer in the US Foreign Service with diplomatic postings in Jerusalem, Washington, Tunisia, and Beirut in particular. Laura, we'll be speaking about unpacking the IHRA definition and implications for Palestinian rights and the battle against genuine antisemitism.

Laura Friedman

All right. Thank you all very much. And I've really appreciated all the previous interventions. I'll try to be brief. It's been a long discussion already. So, I've been asked to talk about the IHRA definition of antisemitism. For those who aren't familiar with this, this is the definition of antisemitism that was adopted on May 26th, 2016, by the International Holocaust Remembrance Alliance, which is an organization devoted obviously to remembering the Holocaust and to fighting the trends that led to the Holocaust. So, part one of the IHRA definition is a short and, I would argue, not terribly clear sentence, I'll read it to you. "Antisemitism is a certain perception of Jews, which may be expressed as hatred toward Jews. Rhetorical and physical manifestations of antisemitism are directed towards Jewish and non-Jewish individuals and or their property toward Jewish community institutions and religious facilities." So that's the whole definition, the actual definition. But part two of the IHRA definition is a list of illustrative "examples of contemporary antisemitism", and the problem really is with these examples, because a number of them are really about Israel; they're not about Judaism. In fact, they allied the distinction between Judaism and Israel, between Jews and Israelis. And in effect, they conflate legitimate criticism, or frankly, any criticism of the modern state of Israel or the political ideology of Zionism, with antisemitism, and you can go and look at these yourselves. The two most problematic ones, there's language in there which is taken to mean that it is, or the way it's argued, is basically arguing that if you are criticizing only Israel and not criticizing every other country that is guilty of similar things as what you criticize Israel for, then it is ipso facto anti-Semitic. I call this all-lives matter mattering of criticism of Israel. You can only criticize Israel if you criticize everybody. That

is, I would argue, the most problematic one. Regardless of the intentions of the drafters, this has been the outcome.

The IHRA definition has, from its first appearance, raised serious concerns that it would be used against Palestinians, advocates for Palestinian rights, and against critics of Israel more broadly. And to be clear, the reasons that it raised concerns are precisely the reasons why it is so strongly supported and promoted by the government of Israel and groups dedicated to defending Israel and defending Israeli impunity. It's not a coincidence. The fact is that the sole added value of the IHRA definition compared to other definitions that are out there or even compared to a common sense understanding of antisemitism, which most of us understand to mean hatred, violence, threats, and discrimination against Jews because they are Jewish. The sole added value of the IHRA definition is as a tool to delegitimize, quash, repress, and even suppress free speech critical of Israel and voices defending Palestinian rights. Now, the concern that IHRA's definition will be used to be weaponized in this way is not merely hypothetical. The first thing to note is that the IHRA organization describes it as a non-legally binding definition. But the fact is that from the start, there has been an effort to make it effectively legally binding, either by enforcing it as a matter of policy, as we've seen in Europe, or in the US, where we've seen an effort to enforce it as a matter of law in multiple US states, where we have several US states that have linked it to their hate crime laws. And the actual weaponization of the IHRA definition to undermine free speech critical of Israel or in defence of Palestinian rights is well documented. I would refer people to the report by Canada's own Independent Jewish Voices last year, which took a comprehensive look at this.

And I'd also quote the ACLU led letter to the American Bar Association, which noted that the IHRA definition has been instrumentalized again and again to delegitimize critics and criticism of Israel and its policies to suppress voices, activism, and support for Palestinian rights. The most common targets of IHRA-based attacks have been university students, professors, and grassroots organizers over their speech and activism on Israel and Palestine. IHRA has likewise been used to disparage, among others, human rights and civil society organizations, humanitarian groups, and members of Congress for documenting or criticizing Israeli policies or speaking out about Palestinian rights. And

I would note here that IHRA is what is pointed to when anyone in the United States, including members of Congress, uses, for example, the word apartheid, citing the Human Rights Watch report citing Amnesty International, and the answer we get is, oh, according to IHRA, even to use that word is anti-Semitic.

In this context, it has to be understood that discrimination against those who advocate for Palestinian rights, whether we're talking about in Europe, the US, Canada, or wherever, is a feature, not a bug, of the IHRA definition. Indeed, I would argue that it is the key defining feature of the IHRA definition. It can not only involve discrimination and acts and attacks against those who advocate for Palestinian rights; it requires it. That's the point. And defenders of the IHRA definition often argue, "You must define it, to fight it." I would say that what they're actually saying is, as I put in my quotes, "since we haven't managed to quash criticism and activism targeting Israel and Zionism by any other means and advocacy for Palestinian rights, we haven't succeeded in silencing it. The way we're going to do it is by defining it as anti-Semitism, and then we can fight it and shut it down."

I also want to note that there is an argument that is constantly made by backers of the IHRA definition, which is that it is the consensus view. Hurry up and get on board. Everyone agrees. This is the view. This isn't true. I mean, this is just empirically not true. If you look at the various categories, they have lists where they talk about the thousands of entities that have endorsed it. For each category of entities, it is a statistically insignificant percentage that has endorsed it. You have the number of US states; many have endorsed it, but they've endorsed it by proclamation, not by law. The academic institutions, again, are statistically insignificant. It is so few in every category. Beyond that, this definition is deeply controversial; it is also a subject of widespread debate and all-out battles, including and maybe especially for people who care about what the view is instead of let Jews define for themselves; I'm Jewish. We should be defining anti-Semitism among scholars of anti-Semitism, Jewish history, and the Holocaust. This is Raucously debated. The lead drafter of this definition, Ken Stern, argues against the way it is being implemented. He says it was never meant to be used this way. It is meant to be used as a research tool. And he speaks and writes publicly about this. And beyond that, you've had two alternative definitions that have come out of largely the Jewish

community. This is the Jerusalem Declaration on Anti-Semitism and the Nexus definition. And both of these were intended to show a different way to define anti-Semitism that isn't IHRA, which came out of the deep discomfort and unhappiness people had around IHRA.

I would finally note in this context that last week, the Biden administration released its much-awaited, long-awaited, huge strategy on anti-Semitism. How do we fight anti-Semitism? And IHRA was mentioned; it was mentioned as the most "prominent definition" among others. They also mentioned the Nexus definition. They said, among others, that are welcome. The fact is the Biden administration did not wholeheartedly embrace the IHRA definition. And that, I would argue, reflected what they came to understand when really surveying the ground was the consensus view. The consensus view is IHRA is not the consensus and is deeply problematic. And I think this is relevant when we look at Canada, when we look at other countries considering whether or not to adopt or whether or not to fully embrace. The Biden administration, I think has gone a long way to demonstrate a more responsible way forward. One, which does not put into place what is effectively a definition which is designed to fuel anti-Palestinian racism and to shut down free speech, and that's very important. The point of the IHRA definition in effect is to associate anything that is related to an expression of Palestinian identity or Palestinian rights, whether we're talking about criticizing the deprivation of rights on the ground by Israel or the right to advocate for Palestinians in the international community, it is an attempt to basically frame them as ipso facto antisemitism. This is anti-Palestinian racism in one of its crudest forms. And I think it needs to be recognized as such.

I guess finally, in the context of this conversation, we're talking about Canada. I think it's important to recognize Canada's official endorsement of IHRA would further legitimize what is a deeply problematic definition, and unnecessarily so. It is not only possible to fight antisemitism without the IHRA definition. I would argue that the IHRA definition is an impediment to fighting anti-Semitism because it disconnects the real anti-Semitism that is going on the ground from the battle and puts at the forefront of fighting anti-Semitism what is in effect a political agenda of fighting Palestinian identity, fighting Palestinian claims, and fighting Palestinian rights. All of these are in the name of fighting anti-Semitism when real anti-Semitism is surging in North America and around the world.

If Canada cares about anti-Semitism, it absolutely needs to put this at the forefront of its efforts. It needs to be fighting anti-Semitism. The way to do that is not centring anti-Palestinian racism. And that's going to be, I think, the real challenge going forward. And I'll stop there.

Comments and Q & A

Question 1:

Hello. My question is to NDP MP, Boulerice, I'm wondering what your party is going to do to try to get Canada to stop sending weapons or allowing the export of weapons to Israel. And I was at this morning at Cansec, our two-day arm spirits, the largest arms fair in North America. Israel had a booth with diplomatic representation. It has many of its arms companies, represented including Elbit. Canada in its latest arms exports report shows that arms exports to Israel is up 33%. We're sending 26 million worth of weapons to Israel, I mean, guns, ammunition, etc. So, Canada's weapons are killing Palestinians. And we do need to stop the arms, the arms experts, and the arms trade, so I'd like to hear what more, what your party is planning to do to, to stop it. Thanks.

Question 2:

Thank you so much, I serve as Secretary General for Amnesty International Canada, thank you so much for the speakers for your wonderful and great interventions. I will abstain from making a comment very often to take the mic, comment, and a question. So, I have many comments, but I'll abstain. I have one question perhaps to the MPs who are here, Canada recently announced its application to the Human Rights Council in 2028, I think it represents a unique opportunity to re-engage Canada on human rights internationally and to challenge Canada's double standards on countries very specifically on Palestine. To what extent do you intend to engage with the current government on this particular candidacy and leverage it to re-ensure that there is alignment with the international human rights standards when it comes to Palestine. If we have time, I will just ask Mr. Ahmad and Gordon to expand a little bit on the security of Israel and the extent to which it is not just violating the rights of Palestinians but its contribution to the violation of rights across the world

thinking particularly to the jails and the criminalizing systems that are disproportionately impacting indigenous, racialized and Muslim communities, and how we can further expand that in the conversation we have today, making that connection? Thank you.

Question 3:

Thanks. My question is to the MPs as well. I understand that just this week a number of organizations spoke out about former prime minister Naftali Bennett whose going to be coming to Canada in about two weeks to speak and asked that the Minister would exclude him from Canada for inadmissibility under section 35(1) of the Immigration and Refugee Protection Act 2001 (IRPA) for complicity in war crimes which of course the settlements were going on under his watch and just wonder your thoughts as whether he should be excluded as inadmissible to Canada on that basis.

Answers:

Elizabeth May MP

There are so many questions within that. So first of all, I just want to pause and say this was an extraordinary panel, and I wanna thank all of the presenters and I wanna thank, her excellency, Mona, for making it possible for us to participate. The Green Party shares the view of the NDP, we should not be sending Arms to Israel, period. What's going on at Cansec should be a source of shame for every Canadian, the existence of an arms show in Ottawa. We used to not be a nation that had a military industrial complex at that. We used to not be a nation that benefited from an arms trade. And we have expanded it dramatically over the last couple of decades in many directions. So just to say that we share that view, we also share the view that we should have labeling on products so Canadians can decide to ensure that they are not supporting the forced labor, unfair conditions, and the settlement project in general.

I'm trying to remember all the questions we heard today, but what we do in parliament, we do our best. I'd say that, and there is more all the time. Let me just say, there are more MPs of various parties, not just the ones you've seen before you today, who are deeply distressed by the double standard,

deeply distressed by the policies of the current government of Israel. I don't know about excluding Naftali Bennett. I've gotta say that when you compare Netanyahu to Naftali Bennett one wonders. The last time Netanyahu came to this country, Stephen Harper was prime minister. And I'll never forget it because parliamentarians were invited to meet him. But nowadays we have a different approach. Every head of government that comes to Canada, if they're going to come into the parliament buildings, opposition members of parliament, or at least the heads of parties, meet them. What is seared in my mind is that when prime Minister Netanyahu was here, Stephen Harper brought tanks to Centre Block. I'd never seen tanks at Centre Block in my life, but it was a sign of respect and a general glorification of militarism that was most unpleasant. I won't keep ranting on and on. We have to get to Question Period soon, and I know Alexander will have to go, but we are united in our commitment to draw attention to the fact that Israel is not accountable for its crimes and needs to be.

Alexander Boulerice MP

Thanks for the questions, and thanks ambassador for organizing everything. And thanks for all the speakers. It was really fantastic. About Mr. Bennett. I'm sorry, I don't have enough information to have a clear mind about it, but what I can say is that the NDP released a statement in, I think it was in March, it was by our spokesperson for foreign affairs. And there's three things in that statement that were really, clear. Stop selling arms to Israel until human rights are respected for everybody, Palestinians included. And second thing, don't meet with certain ministers from the Netanyahu government, the more extremists, I think there was two or three of them. And I'm sorry I made a mistake previously. We are asking for not only not labeling products, but to ban the import of products coming from illegal colonies, illegal settlements. And yes, we are supporting the Candidacy of Canada to the Human Rights Commission also. - And use it as a tool too (Elizabeth May)- Exactly. And to work with the federal government to make our voice more coherent and stronger in defending human rights everywhere and for Palestinians too.

Elizabeth May MP

Forgive me for throwing one more thing in that I think the Canadians need to ask the question, why do we unquestionably support military operations in Israel and never and this may be the opposite of what you expect in terms of the whataboutism, but how is it that the government of Israel has done nothing to sanction Putin or Russia in Ukraine? Now, we obviously can point out the double standard that Canadians are responding very forcefully to the suffering of the people of Ukraine and are ignoring the suffering of people of Palestine. I see that, but I also think it's an opportunity to ask why it is of our "allies" and modern "democracies" that Israel has done nothing despite the fact that Putin is close to Netanyahu. And that's why Netanyahu and Putin have an opportunity potentially to be helpful on what Canada sees right now as our major foreign policy preoccupation. Why is that? And I think the question needs to be asked why it is that the state of Israel has done nothing to sanction Russia. When everyone else in that orbit of so-called like-minded countries has done so.

Wesam Ahmed

We saw as Palestinians for a long time, and more recently, how quickly international community is able to respond to Ukraine and how unable it's been to act with regard to Palestine, but to address your question with regard to the market driven oppression that Israel has developed and thrives off of, there's a lot to be discussed there. There's actually another panel that will be held in RightsCon called the Pegasus Effect, which looks at not only the end use of such technology and how it's used to oppress dissidents and journalists from places like, Mexico and Spain to India, but also look at how Palestine serves as this laboratory to develop such technology. Unfortunately, as long as there are buyers that incentive structure continues to be fed. And the reality is from Israel's involvement in this arms expo to a recent announcement that Israel seeks to be an AI superpower in the advancement of autonomous warfare. The development of that technology is going to come at whose expense, and this is you know, the question we have to ask ourselves is where we are in sense of humanity, that we allow one member of the international community to act in a way that holds a captive population and develops technology, and then is able to benefit from the sale of that technology that comes at their expense, this is a bigger question. I think we need to ask ourselves where we are going as humanity.

Concluding Remark:

Karen Rodman:

So, we are being asked, I think, to wrap things up. There are a couple of questions online we didn't get to, and I think there's a couple of questions in the room, but maybe we could do some follow up. We'll talk to Law for Palestine about maybe responding to some of those questions as part of the follow up with the recording, at least what recording we'll have to send after. So, I want to say a very special thank you to our six panelists. There's a lot of food for thought around accountability of third third states in particular Canada. And while our MPs have had to get off to the house, which we all do understand we do thank them for working with ambassador Mona Abuamara for making this happen. Otherwise, it couldn't have happened here on Parliament Hill. So, thank you so much for making this happen. And thank you to Law for Palestine for pulling this all together. It's hard when people are in the other side of the world. It's the evening for some of the folks that are working in the background on this now. So, thank you for giving me the honor to be part of this.

I think, you know, as we look at embracing responsibility, in particular, Canada's responsibility towards Palestine under international law and accountability in terms of our own domestic law, we have just started a conversation in this moment. It's not a new conversation because it's a conversation that goes back before partition and there's work to be done. But it's work that must be done with civil society engaging to meet the decision makers, legislative decision makers and policymakers which can make the differences of the things that do need to happen, and they need to happen so urgently. So, I just thank everyone for being part of the start of this conversation. And my understanding is that this will be an ongoing process. There'll be more events, more discussions like this here in Ottawa across Canada and internationally as well. So, thank you to everyone who took time to attend both online and here.

Thank you everyone. Thank you.

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