



Mrs. Federica Mogherini
EU High Representative for Foreign Affairs and Security Policy
Vice-President of the European Commission
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Brussels, 7 February 2017

Dear Mrs. Vice President/High Representative,

Pax Christi International strongly condemns yesterday's approval of the settlement expansion bill by the Knesset which retroactively legalises 4000 settler homes. This bill is unacceptable because it gives the Israeli government the right to expropriate privately-owned Palestinian lands in the West Bank. The Israeli state does not have the authority to make decisions regarding lands belonging to people who are not citizens of Israel; such an action is a flagrant breach of the fourth Geneva Convention. In our statement of last year¹, we expressed our concerns that the policies of the Israeli government violate the rights of Palestinians —and in recent months, the situation has deteriorated further.

Yesterday, the EU Foreign Affairs Council—of which you are the chair—reaffirmed the EU position on the settlements: that they are contrary to international law and an obstacle to a peace agreement. The Council also expressed its will for continuous efforts for a political solution with the international community.² Additionally, following the developments in the Knesset the proposed meeting of the EU-Israel Association Council has been postponed. Our movement welcomes this decision, but also would like to underline that more action is needed from the EU.

Pax Christi International calls upon the EU to take a much stronger stance towards the Israeli government in condemning the aforementioned policies which are incompatible with the human rights clause of the EU-Israel Association Agreement. According to article 2, the relations between the parties as well as the agreement should be based on respect for human rights and democratic principles, which constitute an essential element of the agreement.³ The EU should therefore consider suspending economic relations until Israel respects International law.

¹ The Pax Christi International statement of December 1st 2016: <http://www.paxchristi.net/news/israel-palestine-call-new-israeli-palestinian-peace-process-moment-renewed-commitment/6433#sthash.mJKqJwJu.dpbs>

² EU External Action Service, Remarks by the HRVP Federica Mogherini at the press conference following the Foreign Affairs Council', February 6th 2017, available at: https://eeas.europa.eu/headquarters/headquarters-homepage/20031/remarks-hrvp-federica-mogherini-press-conference-following-foreign-affairs-council_en

³ EU External Action Service, , The EU-Israel Association Agreement, June 21st 2000, available at: http://www.eeas.europa.eu/archives/delegations/israel/documents/eu_israel/asso_agree_en.pdf

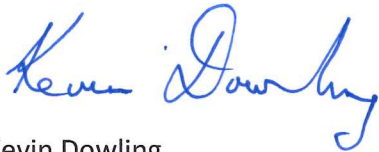
Moreover, the EU should take a lead role in pushing the international community to renew their commitment for diplomacy and a new peace process. Considering the geopolitical changes in the world, the revival of the Israeli-Palestinian peace process is in jeopardy and a stronger role for the EU is urgently needed, including in the upcoming talks with the new US government. Pax Christi International urges the EU to increase its contribution to a just resolution to the long-standing Israeli-Palestinian conflict as it is critical for peace in our world today.

In the words of H.B. Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem and former President of Pax Christi International: "We can help leaders and people to free themselves from fear and mistrust and to reach the so long-desired peace. The beginning of Palestinian freedom is also the beginning of reconciliation between the two peoples, Palestinians and Israelis."⁴

Yours sincerely,



Marie Dennis
Co-President Pax Christi International



Kevin Dowling
Co-President Pax Christi International

⁴ Statement of 11 December 2009 by H.B. Michel Sabbah, Latin Patriarch Emeritus of Jerusalem and former President of Pax Christi International together with other prominent Christian leaders who launched the Kairos Palestine Document in an international conference in Dar Annadwa in Bethlehem, Palestine. For further information on the Kairos Palestine document, see this website: <http://kairospalestine.ps/index.php/component/content/article/33-english/about-us/leadership/kairos-palestine-co-authors/34-patriarch-michel-sabbah>