

Canadian Political Parties - Comparison and Facts *Partis politiques canadiens - comparaison et faits*

CJPME 2019 Election Guide / Guide électoral 2019 de CJPME

PALESTINE-ISRAEL: RESPONSE TO TRUMP'S DESTRUCTIVE DECISIONS

Assessment / Évaluation

	Conservative Party of Canada / Parti conservateur du Canada	F
	New Democratic Party / Nouveau Parti démocratique	A-
	Liberal Party of Canada / Parti libéral du Canada	B-
	Bloc Québécois	n/a
	Green Party of Canada / Parti Vert du Canada	B

Executive Summary

Of all the major Canadian political parties, the NDP fared best, given their consistent condemnations of Donald Trump's chaotic pronouncements related to Israel-Palestine. While the Greens were particularly outspoken against Trump's Jerusalem decree, they failed to speak up for Palestinian refugees, and failed to address Trump's attempt to legitimize Israel's illegal territorial ambitions. The Liberal Party received a moderate score, as they failed to condemn Trump's Jerusalem decision, yet did speak out against Trump's Golan Heights decree and maintained essential Canadian funding to Palestinian refugees.

Overall, the Conservative Party is far too welcoming of Trump's destructive Israel-Palestine policies, having already adopted the Trump administration's position on Jerusalem and Palestinian refugees. The BQ did not receive a grade as CJPME was unable to find specific

Sommaire exécutif

De tous les grands partis politiques canadiens, le NPD a eu la meilleure note, compte tenu de ses condamnations constantes des déclarations chaotiques de Donald Trump concernant Israël et la Palestine. Bien que les verts se soient prononcés ouvertement contre le décret de Trump sur Jérusalem, ils n'ont pas défendu les réfugiés palestiniens, et n'ont pas abordé la tentative de Trump de légitimer les ambitions territoriales illégales d'Israël. Le Parti libéral a reçu une note moyenne, étant donné qu'il n'a pas condamné la décision de Trump sur Jérusalem, mais a condamné le décret de Trump sur les hauteurs du Golan et a maintenu le financement canadien essentiel aux réfugiés palestiniens. Dans l'ensemble, le Parti conservateur est beaucoup trop favorable aux politiques destructrices de Trump sur Israël et la Palestine, ayant déjà adopté la position de l'administration Trump sur Jérusalem et les

statements on this file.

réfugiés palestiniens. Le BQ n’a pas reçu de note, car CJPME n’a trouvé aucune déclaration de ce dernier sur le sujet.

Background

Since his election in 2016, US President Donald Trump has made a series of surprising and destabilizing decisions concerning Palestine-Israel – decisions which contravene international law and reverse decades of historic American foreign policy. Human rights defenders have pointed out that Trump’s one-sided approach to Palestine-Israel makes a mockery of US attempts to act as honest-broker in negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians. Some of Trump’s most scrutinized actions in Palestine-Israel include the following:

Bucking law and international convention on Jerusalem: In December 2017, President Trump announced that the United States would recognize Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and ordered the relocation of the US embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem. Trump’s decree on Jerusalem ignores countless UN resolutions, notably Security Council Resolution 478 (1980), which called on all UN members to withdraw diplomatic missions from Jerusalem. Israel seized control of East Jerusalem illegally in 1967 and has since then “annexed” and colonized the territory – despite several condemnations from the UN, human rights organizations, and countries around the world.¹ Analysts of the Israel-Palestine conflict have long considered Jerusalem to be a “final status issue” in that it will only be resolved through a negotiated settlement. Trump’s move, however, serves to legitimize Israel’s continued occupation of East Jerusalem. It also rewards Israel without demanding any concessions in return, which underscores just how biased Trump’s approach is.

Scuttling relations with the Palestinian leadership: Donald Trump began scuttling relations with Palestinian leadership when he recognized Israel’s claim to Jerusalem and cancelled funding to Palestinian refugees. However, Trump went one step further in September 2018 when he decided to close down the PLO office in Washington, effectively expelling the Palestinian political leadership from the United States. The American government justified its decision by citing concerns regarding PLO efforts to prompt an investigation of Israel by the International Criminal Court (ICC). Trump further alienated the Palestinian leadership by developing a peace “deal” without any involvement by the Palestinians.

Abandoning Palestinian refugees: The US has long been the most generous contributor to UNRWA - the UN aid agency that provides health, education and development services to over 5 million Palestinian refugees. Year after year, the US typically provided about one third of UNRWA’s overall working budget. The Trump administration, however, cut all funding to UNRWA in 2018, accusing the organization of mismanaging funds and perpetuating the refugee status of Palestinians.

Legitimizing Israel’s illegal territorial ambitions: Since Trump’s election, the American government has legitimized illegal Israeli territorial ambitions in the occupied Palestinian and Syrian territories. For example, in March 2019, Trump became the first world leader to recognize Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights, Syrian territory occupied and illegally colonized by Israel since 1967. Shortly afterward, in June 2019, US Ambassador to Israel David Friedman expressed support for a possible Israeli annexation of the occupied Palestinian territories, stating that “Israel has the right to retain some...of the West Bank.”²

Liberal Position

The Liberal Party under the leadership of Justin Trudeau has taken an extremely cautious approach to Trump’s Israel-Palestine decisions. With regards to the US embassy move, the Trudeau government remained quiet about the American decision to move its embassy, meanwhile reassuring Canadians that

the Canadian embassy would remain in Tel-Aviv.³ Despite Canada's statement, the Liberal government voted against an UN General Assembly resolution condemning Trump's decree.⁴

In late 2018, the Trudeau government announced it would be renewing its \$50-million funding commitment to Palestinian refugee after US President Trump cut American funding to the UN aid agency.⁵ While the Trudeau government sought to position the announcement as new funding in wake of Trump's cuts to Palestinian refugees, it was unclear whether the funding wasn't merely a repackaging of existing Canadian commitments to Palestinian refugees.

While the Liberals have remained quiet on statements made by US officials about West Bank annexation, the Liberals did issue a statement opposing Trump's recognition of Israeli sovereignty over the Golan Heights. In March 2019, Global Affairs Canada stated that "Canada does not recognize permanent Israeli control over the Golan Heights" and that "annexation of territory by force is prohibited under international law."⁶

Conservative Position

The Conservative Party has supported – and even adopted – many of US President Donald Trump's positions on Israel-Palestine. One such example is the US government's decision to move the American embassy to Jerusalem. Echoing Trump's decision, in February 2018, Conservative Party leader Andrew Scheer vowed to relocate the Canadian Embassy to Jerusalem,⁷ breaking with decades of international consensus. This promise also breaks with long-standing official Canadian policy on Israel-Palestine, which has never recognized Israel's illegal annexation of East Jerusalem. Scheer further vowed to recognize Jerusalem, including occupied East Jerusalem, as Israel's capital, after suggesting that Israel had "liberated" the old city of Jerusalem (i.e. East Jerusalem).⁸ In August 2018, the majority of the Conservative Party membership voted in favour of adopting a resolution that recognizes Jerusalem as the capital of Israel and calls for Canada to move its embassy from Tel-Aviv to Jerusalem.⁹

Conservatives hailed Trump's decision to cancel American funding to UNRWA in 2018, after lambasting the Trudeau government for reinstituting Canadian funding to UNRWA¹⁰ cut by the Harper government. Conservative MPs have continually sought to smear UNRWA's reputation, calling for an end to Canadian funding to the organization.¹¹ In fact, as recently as July 2019, Andrew Scheer announced that if elected, a Conservative government will effectively withhold all funding to the aid agency.¹²

While there are no Conservative statements in support of Israel's illegal territorial ambitions, the Conservatives often fail to recognize international law concerning Israel's colonies in the oPt, opting to use the term "contested settlements" rather than "illegal settlements" as defined by numerous UN Security Council resolutions.¹³

NDP Position

Most of the NDP's positions with regards to Trump's decisions towards Israel-Palestine are based on international law and long-standing international and Canadian convention. Concerning Trump's Jerusalem decision, the NDP immediately condemned the move and warned against the Conservative Party's aspirations to "copy Donald Trump's foreign policy," on Israel-Palestine.¹⁴ The NDP Foreign Affairs Critic Hélène Laverdière strongly urged the Trudeau government to condemn Trump's recognition of Jerusalem as Israel's capital.¹⁵

On the UNRWA file, during the Harper years, the NDP was very active in calling on for the reinstatement of Canadian funding, citing UNRWA's status as a lifeline for many Palestinian refugees.¹⁶ Speaking to the importance of maintaining support for UNRWA, Laverdière rebuked Trump's "retreat from multilateralism" on the international stage.¹⁷

When Trump recognized Israeli sovereignty over the occupied Golan Heights, NDP leader Jagmeet Singh was quick to tweet a response opposing the move as a contravention of international law, calling on the Trudeau government to condemn this decision.¹⁸

Bloc Quebecois Position

While the BQ has not issued any formal statements opposing Trump's destructive decisions on Israel-Palestine, BQ MPs have occasionally expressed their opposition to foreign embassies in Jerusalem and illegal Israeli territorial ambitions.¹⁹

Green Position

The Green Party of Canada under the leadership of Elizabeth May has repeatedly condemned American support for Israel's human rights abuses against Palestinians and violations of international law. The Green Party condemned Trump's decision to relocate the US embassy to Jerusalem, citing international law and consensus, while criticizing the Trudeau government for its inaction on this file.²⁰

CJPME was unable to find any other Green Party statement on Trump's other destabilizing decrees on Israel-Palestine.

¹ "Jerusalem: Following the Trump Decree," CJPME Factsheet, March 1st, 2018, https://www.cjpme.org/fs_205.

² "US ambassador: Israel has right to annex parts of West Bank." The Guardian. June 8th, 2019. <https://www.theguardian.com/world/2019/jun/08/us-ambassador-israel-david-friedman-west-bank-annexation>.

³ "Canada Keeping Israel Embassy in Tel Aviv, despite U.S. Move to Jerusalem," Global News, December 6, 2017, <https://globalnews.ca/news/3900445/canada-embassy-jerusalem-israel/>.

⁴ "Jerusalem: Following the Trump Decree," CJPME Factsheet, March 1st, 2018, https://www.cjpme.org/fs_205.

⁵ Mike Blanchfield, "Canada Giving \$50M To UNRWA After Trump White House Pulls Funding," Huffington Post, October 12, 2018, https://www.huffingtonpost.ca/2018/10/12/canada-unrwa-palestinian-refugee_a_23559389/.

⁶ "Statement on the Golan Heights," Global Affairs Canada, March 25, 2019, <https://www.canada.ca/en/global-affairs/news/2019/03/statement-on-the-golan-heights.html>.

⁷ Stephanie Levitz, "Scheer says Tories will recognize Jerusalem as Israel's capital if elected," CBC News, February 26, 2018, <https://www.cbc.ca/news/politics/scheer-jerusalem-trump-israel-1.4552646>.

⁸ "Debates (Hansard) No. 344 - October 29, 2018 (42-1) - House of Commons of Canada."

⁹ "CJPME: Tory Vote on Jerusalem Ignores Palestinian Human Rights," CJPME Press Release, August 28, 2018, https://www.cjpme.org/pr_2018_08_28.

¹⁰ "Debates (Hansard) No. 381 - February 8, 2019 (42-1) - House of Commons of Canada."

¹¹ "Andrew Scheer on Twitter. <https://twitter.com/AndrewScheer/status/1123316341660893184>"

¹² Marie-Danielle Smith, "Canada 'concerned' by allegations of misconduct at UN agency for Palestinian refugees." National Post, July 31, 2019, <https://nationalpost.com/news/politics/canada-concerned-by-allegations-of-misconduct-at-un-agency-for-palestinian-refugees>.

¹³ "Debates (Hansard) No. 381 - February 8, 2019 (42-1) - House of Commons of Canada."

¹⁴ "Debates (Hansard) No. 412 - May 8, 2019 (42-1) - House of Commons of Canada."

¹⁵ "NDP Statement on President Trump's Announcement on Jerusalem," December 6, 2017, <https://www.ndp.ca/news/ndp-statement-president-trumps-announcement-jerusalem>.

¹⁶ "Debates (Hansard) No. 13 - February 1, 2016 (42-1) - House of Commons of Canada."

¹⁷ "NDP Calls on Liberals to Disavow Trump's Retreat From Multilateralism."

¹⁸ Jagmeet Singh. Twitter. <https://twitter.com/theJagmeetSingh/status/1108852405074984960>

¹⁹ Debates (Hansard) No. 351 – November 7, 2018 – House of Commons of Canada.

²⁰ "Green Party of Canada condemns Trump's move on Jerusalem, Canada's weak response," Green Party of Canada, December 13, 2017, <https://www.greenparty.ca/en/media-release/2017-12-13/green-party-canada-condemns-trump%E2%80%99s-move-jerusalem-canada%E2%80%99s-weak-response-0>.