

## **Canada's loss a victory for International Law, and the UN.**

### **Much vaunted campaign sunk by Canada's choosing Israel over a rules-based order. Again.**

Functioning at the UN as Israel's defence lawyer for its serial violations of international law has once again cost Canada the coveted Security Council (UNSC) seat. And rightly so. The UN charter unambiguously declares its objective as "respect for international law."

It was widely accepted that Stephen Harper's staunch support for Israel contributed to his defeat for a Security Council seat a decade ago.

UN appointee and recognized Canadian expert on international law Professor Michael Lynk understatedly warned last month, "If Canada's campaign for a council seat is once again unsuccessful, its taciturn approach to the Israeli-Palestinian conflict will surely have been a contributing factor."

In 2018, dozens of Canadian NGOs encouraged the PM and Foreign Minister Freeland in the UNSC seat bid, however cautioning on Palestine, that makes it "now more imperative than ever that Canada's voting record at the United Nations is one that reflects the principles of international law." Nonetheless, shortly thereafter Freeland announced that a UNSC seat would allow Canada to serve as an "asset for Israel."

As Canada maintained months of silence in the face of worldwide condemnation over Israel's threat of annexing Palestinian territory, last month over 100 Canadian and international NGOs wrote to all UN Ambassadors to ensure that Canada's recalcitrance in the face of international law governing Palestinian rights didn't go unnoticed. Corey Balsam of Independent Jewish Voices observed, "Trudeau speaks a lot about the importance of maintaining a rules-based international order ... but of course, annexation is at complete odds with international law and those rules."

'Twas not ever thus. 20 years ago when rose petals filled the fountain in front of the House of Commons at the passing of Pierre Elliot Trudeau, recalling his signature lapel rose, PM Chretien reflected, "On the international stage, he gave us a profile and stature well beyond our size and power. Wherever we were in the world, he made us feel proud to be Canadians..." Days later I was called to a meeting with the Prime Minister where he sought insights and support for continuing to steer a Canadian course on the Palestinian-Israeli conflict in the face of intense pressure from the Israel Lobby over Canada's voting at the UN, the last time it sat on the UNSC.

Now, the bloom is off the rose. For the UNSC seat, former UN ambassador for disarmament, Canadian Peggy Mason recently stated Palestinian rights "matters in the voting. It played a role in our unsuccessful 2010 campaign...it would have been unthinkable when I was ambassador -- Canada voting with the US, Israel and sometimes the Marshall Islands -- on UN resolutions where the entire rest of the UN is voting in favour." She noted the hypocrisy of "isolating

ourselves in that way when we're a self-declared champion of international law yet our voting record doesn't reflect that." Canada's loss is the UN's victory.

The failed campaign culminated with a desperate, if disingenuous response to the NGO letter by Canada's UN ambassador to the other Ambassador: "This year, <Canada> voted yes on one more resolution" at the UN supporting Palestinian rights. Thus obscured the fact that it was one more than zero under this Prime Minister, while voting against 67.

Karen Rodman of the law NGO Just Peace Advocates observed, "Within Canada and internationally, civil society has spoken. Being an "asset for Israel" while eroding international law is not acceptable."

And this is out of step the desire of most Canadians to be an international force for peace and human rights. An EKOS poll this week found 74% of Canadians oppose Israeli annexation, while a plurality of Canadians even want to impose sanctions against Israel if the annexation plan proceeds.

The defeat ought to be a clarion call for the Canadian government to join the Canadian and international consensus on Israel and international law.

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