



Press Release: Expressing concern over parliamentary statement reinforcing anti-Palestinian stereotypes issued by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs

OTTAWA (December 14, 2021) - The Coalition of Canadian Palestinian Organizations (CCPO) strongly condemns the anti-Palestinian sentiments implied by the Canadian Minister of Foreign Affairs, Mélanie Joly, in a House of Commons debate on December 7, 2021.

The debate centered around Canada's support for Palestinian refugees through the United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA). When asked about Canada's financial support to UNRWA, the Minister responded:

"Madam Chair, of course we will always be there to help vulnerable Palestinians. We would rather see them sitting in classrooms in schools that are funded by United Nations organizations than in the streets fighting. That is exactly why we want to make sure we continue to support UNRWA."

*full transcript can be found [here](#)

Ms. Joly's statement echoes stereotypes that assume that Palestinians are predisposed to violence, and that Western funding to UNRWA schools works to serve as a form of taming mechanism for Palestinians, who, without said funding, would be "in the streets fighting". This statement advances orientalist tropes that frame Arabs as inherently violent and portray Western funding as a means to 'civilize' them.

We remind the Minister that Palestinians, as all other peoples, attend school to gain an education, not to distract themselves from an inclination to violence, as suggested by the Minister.

While we appreciate Canada's continued funding for UNRWA, we are increasingly concerned with the increase in anti-Palestinian rhetoric within Canadian society. Statements such as Ms. Joly's, which are premised on racist stereotypes, inform and embolden the rise of anti-Palestinian, anti-Arab, and Islamophobic attacks.

We urge the Minister to retract her statement, and be conscious of the implications of the language she utilizes in her discourse.

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The Coalition of Canadian Palestinian Organizations (CCPO)

The Coalition of Canadian Palestinian Organizations (CCPO) consists of 24 non-partisan and not-for-profit Canadian