

Honourable Bev Oda  
Minister for International Cooperation  
Canadian International Development Agency  
Gatineau, Quebec.

December 21, 2009

Dear Ms Oda:

We are writing this open letter, on behalf of the 90 members of the Canadian Council for International Co-operation (CCIC), to express the sector's deep shock and dismay at recent events concerning the defunding of KAIROS. First, that a long-standing and highly-respected CCIC member was falsely and publicly labelled as anti-Semitic by a Government Minister. Second, that despite earlier responses to KAIROS and to Parliament, it has been revealed that a plainly political rationale was applied in your decision to de-fund KAIROS as a Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) partner.

Minister for Citizenship, Immigration and Multiculturalism, Jason Kenney, in a speech made last week in Jerusalem to the Global Forum for combating anti-Semitism, falsely named KAIROS as a leader in a boycott campaign against Israel. KAIROS policy documents, available on their website, explicitly indicate that the organization does not support a boycott against Israel. Moreover, a national church spokesperson has since pointed out that KAIROS' policies have been approved by the church members of KAIROS Board and that Minister Kenney is effectively "accusing Canadian Churches of being anti-Semitic." We are shocked that such a serious charge would be so carelessly and erroneously levelled against a member of CCIC.

In addition, as you know, CCIC previously identified widespread NGO concerns that the decision to defund KAIROS appeared driven by partisan and political considerations rather than by established standards, which focus on effective aid delivery and CIDA's strategic objectives outlined in the Official Development Assistance Accountability Act.

Unhappily, Minister Kenney has now confirmed those suspicions and cast grave doubt on the fairness and efficacy of CIDA's processes for review and approval. Already KAIROS and member churches have made public statements questioning the integrity of aid decision making. They correctly note: "Many non-governmental organizations have proposals before CIDA that have been on Minister Oda's desk for months. Others are about to apply for funding. How can they possibly trust this decision-making process in the future?" (*KAIROS Statement December 18, 2009.*)

The defunding of KAIROS, the revelatory comments by Minister Kenney about the nature of the standard used, and the use of defamatory and false charges against a member organization all add up to the need for quick remedial action.

KAIROS' work should be respected, not disparaged, and the long-standing funding partnership between CIDA and KAIROS should be restored. In our view, the Government owes an apology to KAIROS and the national church and faith-based organizations that make up its Board. Finally, urgent steps should now be taken to restore the confidence of Canada's voluntary sector that due process and sound judgement will be behind funding decisions for Canadian aid. We are committed to work with CIDA towards this end.

Sincerely,



Gerry Barr  
President-CEO  
Canadian Council for International Co-operation



Karen Takacs  
Chair  
Canadian Council for International Co-operation