

# Birthright Denied



# **DEDICATION**

**TO: Israel Shahak**

**A Jewish warrior for the truth and human rights -  
a living conscience for humanity,**

**AND TO: MARION KAWAS**

**A Canadian warrior for Palestine and a living  
example of solidarity between the Canadian and  
Palestinian peoples.**

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## *Foreward*

Hanna Kawas, a citizen of Canada asks our government to acknowledge, in his passport, a simple fact: that he was born June 2, 1948 in Bethlehem, Palestine. Our government accepts June 2. It accepts 1948. It accepts Bethlehem. But it refuses to acknowledge Palestine.

In the following pages, you can read the correspondence between Hanna Kawas and the Government of Canada on the question of his birthplace.

When I read the letters what struck me most is the resolve of Hanna Kawas to maintain his dignity, to assert his identity—which includes his place of birth—as an integral part of the Palestinian people’s still unresolved claim to national rights. The letters of the Canadian government expose an obtuse tangle of facts and principles. But I was struck much more by the government proposing false names—Bethlehem Jordan, Bethlehem Israel or Bethlehem (nowhere) —to substitute for Bethlehem, Palestine.

Why such proposals?

A full answer would require an analysis of our government’s overt and covert, sustained and consistent support of Zionism over the last 50 years. In Hanna Kawas’ letter to the Canadian government there are references to some of this.

But there also is a short answer. Our government is prepared to humiliate its own citizens who have come here from Palestine—dispossessed of and driven from their homeland—rather than respect their dignity, minimally acknowledge their birthplace, let alone support their right of return.

Yet at the exact moment I am writing this, Canada’s Minister of Foreign Affairs, comes on the radio to tell Canadians he so opposes ethnic cleansing he is sending yet more military to bomb and make war open those NATO accuses of ethnic cleansing. Surely his claim to belief relies on our ignorance of the Canadian government’s uncritical support of the well-documented Zionist cleansing of Palestine.





## *Introduction*

Few people know that for the Zionist Movement there are two Balfours, one British and the other Canadian . Much has been written and publicized about the British Balfour and the role of his government in the creation of the state of Israel. However, the role of the Canadian Balfour and his government remain unknown and unpublicized, especially amongst the Palestinian people, the Arab people and supporters of the Palestinian national rights in the Hest.

I am motivated by this fact and by the fact that I remain without a Canadian passport, due to this long-standing bias in Canadian policy towards Israel. I







June 10, 1997

To: R. Nelson, Manager  
Passport Office, Surrey

Re: Kawas, Hanna  
File # SU68162

I learned from my wife that yesterday your office refused to put the country of my birth on my Canadian passport.

When I first came to this country 23 years ago, my Canadian visa then indicated that I was born in Bethlehem, Palestine on June 2, 1948. Since I received my Canadian citizenship, all passports issued to me have carried my place of birth as Bethlehem, Palestine, the most recent being passport No. SH712171, issued Aug. 24, 1987.

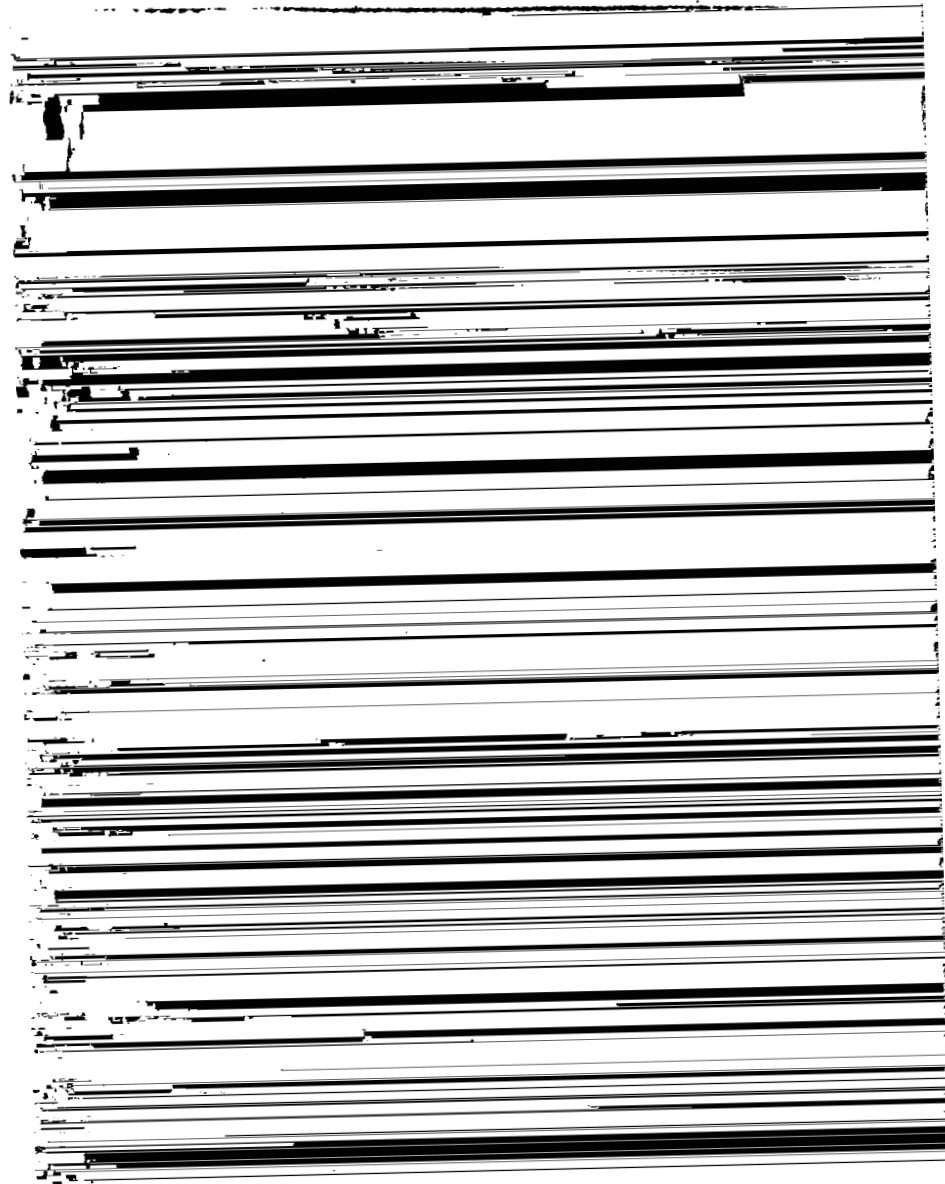
Before you process my new passport, please let me know if there is now a new policy. When did it come into effect? And if there is such a new policy, why did it come into effect? Please send me all the relevant material on this new policy.

***CEO of Passport Office  
Explains the Policy***

July 23, 1997

Dear Mr. Kawas:





*Another example of a Passport Office 'mistake' in dealing with Palestine. Note place of birth: Jaffa, but no country was indicated. This person was born in 1945, well before the creation of the State of Israel.*

*Documenting the history of  
Palestine and the role of Canada*





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offensive, but also far from the truth. You can not imagine how many Palestinians deny the country of their birth (although they agonize over it) just to avoid the unnecessary delays, harassment and abuse they face at the borders and airports of western countries. I personally faced this at London's Heathrow and Chicago's O'Hare airport and the Blaine crossing in Washington State at the U.S. border.

As I documented earlier, on the date of my birth June 2/ 1948, Bethlehem, as one of the cities in the West Bank of the Jordan Rivei, was recognized both internationally and by the Canadian Government









*The “well-researched” response of the  
Canadian Government*



November 19, 199

Dear Mr. Kawas:

Thanks you for your letter of September 12, 1997, concerning the

***Before the Canadian government reversed its policy.***  
Hanna Kawas' passport issued on August 24, 1987 clearly indicated  
BETHLEHEM, PALESTINE.

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## **CANADA'S POSITION ON KEY ISSUES**

The main principles government Canadian policy with regard to the Arab-Israeli dispute are:

### **Security of Israel**

Canada supports the security, well-being and rights of Israel as a legitimate,



## ***A critique of Canadian complicity with Israel***

*Fifty years ago, on November 27, 1947, Canada played a major role  
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*esondi favourofPasrael*

January 3, 1998

Honourable Lloyd Axworthy  
Dept. of Foreign Affairs  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0G2

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refugee, I do not think Canada should even be on the committee, let alone chair it, because Canada is not impartial and has its own hidden agenda. That is why Mr. Andrew Robinson, the chair of the RWG, did not keep his appointment for an interview with the Voice of Palestine



## ***The take it or leave it policy***

*Logic and reason is not part of the Canadian foreign policy*







June 10, 1998

private properties were stolen and confiscated ... 418 towns and villages were demolished and erased from the map of the world. The Canadian government, represented by the Prime Minister, saw fit to celebrate the 50th anniversary of this infamous human tragedy. “May you go from strength to strength”, Mr. Chretien told the celebration in Toronto, sending the wrong message to the Israeli extremists and assuring them that Canada approves of even more injustice against the Palestinians.

The Palestinian people ... those in exile, those under occupation, those who still carry their deeds to their properties, those who still carry the keys to their demolished or usurped homes and those to whom the deeds and keys have been passed on to them by their parents and grand- parents:— All of us commemorated this 50th anniversary by declaring “our resounding presence in time and place, despite all attempts to uproot us from the land which has borne our name from the beginning of time...Slated for national obliteration and severance from the land, we have affirmed our identity and ties to our homeland, snatching our reality from the jaws of oblivion” (The Palestinian People’s Appeal on the 50th anniversary of the Nakba, read by Palestinian poet Mahmoud Darwish on May 14/1998).

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Hanna Kawas,  
Chairperson, Canada Palestine Association,  
Host, Voice of Palestine,  
Vice-President, Canadian Arab Media Association.  
Exec. Member, Canada Palestine Health Research  
Foundation

cc:

Jean Chretien, Prime Minister of Canada  
Yasser Arafat, President of Palestine  
Lloyd Axworthy, Minister of Foreign Affairs,  
Canada  
Dr. Baker Abdel Munem, Palestine Representative  
in Canada  
Libby Davies, MP, Vancouver East

*The refund of my passport fee*



## *Appendix*

### *Letters ...responses ...and documents*

- A letter to the Prime Minister about Canadian investment in Israeli settlements
- The response from the PM office
- Follow up letter to the PM
- Response from the PM office
- A letter to the PM about Canadian vote at UN in favor of Israeli policy
- A response from the Minister of Foreign Affairs
- Explanation of the Canadian Vote
- Liberal Party of Canada positions on Palestinian and Arab Issues

February 21, 1997

Rt. Hon. Jean Chretien  
Prime Ministers Office  
Parliament Bldgs.  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2  
FAX: 613-941-6900

Dear Mr. Prime Minister:

On February 17, 1997, Associated Press reported that, according to Israel Radio, Canada's Reichman Family and the Australian millionaire Joseph Gutnik have bought 34 acres of land next to the controversial "Har Homa" site on the occupied Palestinian West Bank near East Jerusalem and Bethlehem.\*

Israel Radio added that if the Israeli government does not approve the 6500 unit "Har Homa" project soon, the donors themselves (Reichman and Gutnik) will take steps to lay the infrastructure for a new settlement.

Mr. Prime Minister —

Despite the peace process, the uprooting of the Palestinian people continues and the violation of their human and national rights goes on. Just look at the recent evictions of the Jahalin bedouin tribe from their land and the demolition of Palestinian homes near Hebron. The theft and confiscation of Palestinian land to make way for new settlements is against all international laws and an act of piracy which should be condemned by all peace-loving people.

Canada's foreign policy has always considered the building of Jewish settlements in the occupied Palestinian West Bank to be illegal and an obstacle to peace. Therefore, any Canadian involvement in building settlements jeopardizes the image and role of Canada in the Arab Middle East and threatens diplomatic and economic ties to the region.

I urge you to instruct the Minister of Justice to immediately investigate if any Canadian tax laws, especially those regarding tax exemptions, and/or any Canadian national security laws, have been violated by the Reichman Family.

Yours truly,

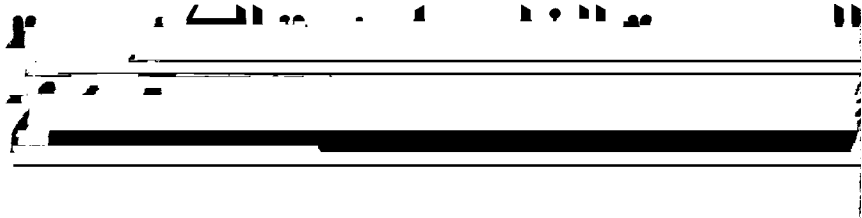
Hanna Kawas  
Chairperson, Canada Palestine Assoc.  
Host, Voice of Palestine

c.c. Minister of Foreign Affairs  
Minister of Justice and Attorney-General  
Yasser Arafat, President of Palestine  
Dr. Baker Abdul Munem, Palestine Rep. to Canada  
North American Coordinating Committee for NGOs on The  
Question of Palestine

*\* Bethlehem is my hometown but I am still not allowed to go back there to live in spite of the peace process. The same applies to the great majority of the Palestinian people in diaspora.*



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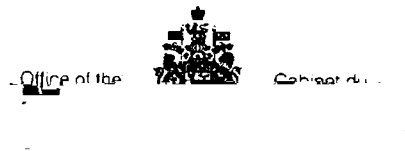
April 25, 1997

Rt. Hon. Jean Chretien  
Office of the Prime Minister  
Ottawa, Ontario  
K1A 0A2

Dear Sir:

Thank you for acknowledging receipt of my letter, dated February 21, 1997, regarding the illegal "Har Homa" settlement in Jerusalem, and the involvement of the Reichman family in such activity.

However, to date, I have received no repin to our concerns from either yourself or Minister of Foreign Affairs, Lloyd Axworthy, who was sent a copy of our letter. Ge regard the issue of Israeli settlement building on occupied Palestinian land to be of utmost importance and



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May 14, 1997

Rt. Hon. Jean Chretien

We think this country should be impartial in the Arab-Israeli conflict, both in words and deeds. We also think Canada should condemn, and work to end, the 30 years of Israeli occupation. Dare we suggest — the same way it worked to end Iraq's occupation of Kuwait; or when it comes to Israel, does the Canadian government have a double standard?

Yours truly,  
Mr. J. T. Smith

Dear Mr. Kawas:

The Prime Minister has forwarded to me a copy of your letter of February 21, 1997, concerning the construction of an Israeli settlement on Har Homa (Abu Ghneim), and that of May 14 pertaining to the situation of Palestinians in Israel and Canada's vote in a United Nations resolution on Israeli actions in East Jerusalem.

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## **EXPLANATION OF VOTE**

### **“Illegal Israeli actions in occupied East Jerusalem and the rest of the Occupied Palestinian Territory”**

Delivered by Ambassador Robert R. Fowler

April 25, 1997

Mr. President,



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### 3. Economic sanctions

Recent history has clearly demonstrated that economic sanctions are not effective in changing national policies unless they comprehensively and globally supported. In rare exceptions, such as South Africa or Iraq, general international consensus did exist in favour of economic sanctions. In each case, provision was made to ensure humanitarian assistance could continue to flow.

### 4. Iraq

Successive Canadian governments have supported the international consensus, reflected in UN Security Council resolutions, to ensure Iraq will not be capable of threatening its neighbours through such means as the use of weapons of mass destruction. However, we also have supported the need for humanitarian assistance to the Iraqi people. This is now being provided through the UN-sponsored arrangement allowing Iraq to sell oil and use the proceeds to acquire and provide food and other humanitarian assistance to its people.

### 5. Refugees

As chair of the Refugee Working Group, Canada plays an important role in seeking agreement on means to ensure Palestinians are success-



