



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

Manitoba Legislature rejects resolution denouncing Israeli Apartheid Week

Toronto, April 20, 2010 – On April 15, the Manitoba Legislative Assembly rejected a resolution introduced by Heather Stefanson, the Conservative member for the Winnipeg riding of Tuxedo, urging the provincial government to denounce Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW) as “divisive, promoting intolerance and undermining a balanced debate of the Israeli-Palestinian question.” The motion argued that Israeli Apartheid Week “may promote anti-Semitic opinions leading to the harassment and intimidation of Jewish students and staff”, and that “the use of the word ‘apartheid’ is offensive to victims of apartheid in South Africa and ignores that Israel is a strong democracy...”

Some of those who spoke against it clarified that their opposition to the motion was based on a desire to avoid publicizing IAW. Neither those supporting the resolution nor those who opposed it – despite claiming that IAW was morally offensive – offered a single example of an actual incident in which Jewish students and staff at Manitoban universities were harassed or subjected to intimidation in the context of IAW. Mainstream IAW initiatives focus exclusively on Israeli government policies.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) welcomes the defeat of the resolution, despite the twisted logic proffered by some of the MLAs who voted against the motion. “Although we are pleased that the resolution was defeated, we would have preferred that the government MLAs acknowledge that criticism of Israel cannot be equated with anti-Semitism, and that such criticism is based on the fact that the Israeli government’s treatment of Palestinians is extremely discriminatory,” said CJPME President Thomas Woodley. He noted that black survivors of South African apartheid, such as Desmond Tutu, have found that the web of measures imposed by Israel on Palestinians is as bad as anything experienced under apartheid South Africa, and that international human rights organizations have documented this reality. “As well, South Africa’s trade unions have called for a boycott of Israeli goods and for South Africa to cease diplomatic ties with Israel, in protest of Israel’s conduct,” he notes.

As documented by Israel’s own Or Commission, the US State Department, and numerous other bodies, Palestinians in the Occupied Territories and within Israel are subjected to a broad range of discriminatory measures that violate their basic human rights and that, taken together, constitute apartheid as defined by the United Nations. Such measures include, but are not limited to: a) discriminatory confiscations of land owned by Palestinians, for exclusive Jewish use, in the West Bank and East Jerusalem, which has been denounced by the Obama administration; b) a discriminatory racially-based family reunification law; c) discriminatory racially-based processes for obtaining building permits; d) non-recognition of long-existing Palestinian villages, and planned destruction of them under Israel’s Negev 2015 Plan; e) racially-based discriminatory policing; f) systemic discrimination in access to benefits, public services and government employment opportunities.

About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

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