



CJPME

CANADIANS FOR JUSTICE AND
PEACE IN THE MIDDLE EAST

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Hamilton Presbytery of United Church opening Gaza photo exhibition

Hamilton, July 6, 2010 — Hamilton Presbytery of the United Church of Canada will be launching the photo exhibition *Human Drama in Gaza* on Friday, July 9 at 8 pm at the Sky Dragon Centre, 27 King William St., Hamilton. A representative of the Social Justice Committee of the Presbytery, and a representative of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) will speak at the launch. A panel discussion on the issue will take place July 24th.

The acclaimed exhibition has previously been shown in Montreal—where it was the target of a campaign to shut it down— as well as in Lévis, Ottawa, Toronto and Yellowknife. It will run in Hamilton until August 5. Produced by Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), it features 44 visually gripping photos taken by top Reuters, Getty Images and Agence France Presse photojournalists from Israel, Palestine and the West during last winter's Israeli assault on Gaza.

The photos provide an intimate glimpse of the impact of the 22-day assault on Gaza that began December 27, 2008. Each photo is accompanied by an explanation based on the notes taken by the photojournalist when capturing the image, complimented with information from international agencies and human rights organizations working in Gaza. The exhibition will be open for public viewing Monday to Saturday from 10 am to 9 pm until August 5.

“The Israeli offensive in Gaza, according to the United Nations report on the offensive, was in large part an attack against a civilian population,” says Centenary United Church minister Dr. Ian Sloan, who initiated the Hamilton showing of the exhibition. “Our Presbytery’s purpose in hosting the exposition is to show that the injustice of an attack against a civilian population is an injustice regardless of who attacks and who is attacked. We hope that a deepening awareness among Canadians of the human cost of such injustice will play a constructive role in efforts at peace-making in the Middle East and in other parts of the world.”

"At its core, *Human Drama in Gaza* is a story about human beings trying to maintain their dignity and hope as their world is destroyed around them," explains CJPME President Thomas Woodley. The exhibition intentionally excludes photos of the machinery of war, and instead focuses on the tragic beauty of average individuals trying to live their lives amid deepening hardship. "The photographers whose works are featured caught both the human impact of the assault, and Gazans' attempt to carry on everyday activities before, during and after the attack. Given the extreme circumstances in Gaza, even the otherwise normal scenes take on a shocking new poignancy. Hamiltonians will find the exhibition doubly meaningful in light of international debate about the blockade of Gaza sparked by the Israeli raid on an aid flotilla challenging the blockade," he notes.

Hamilton Presbytery of The United Church has worked with the Palestinian Association of Hamilton and the Hamilton chapter of Independent Jewish Voices to arrange for the showing in Hamilton. “We welcome Hamiltonians from all backgrounds and walks of life to view this powerful exhibition, which will be of interest to anyone with a genuine interest in peace and in the fate of our brothers and sisters in the Middle East,” declares Sloan. “We particularly hope that our elected representatives will take time to join us. They too have something to learn from the exhibit. From our perspective, the photographic exhibition is a non-violent resistance to violence.”

Hamilton Presbytery of the United Church of Canada has 30 congregations across the Hamilton metropolitan region. As a part of the United Church, it seeks to take the side of those who are oppressed, and through love walk in the ways of justice. CJPME, with over 22,000 adherents, is a

non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who are striving to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower the public and decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the Middle East region.

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