



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

## **Plan for demolitions in East Jerusalem sparks violence and criticism**

Montreal, July 12, 2010 – Clashes continued last week between Israeli settlers’ armed guards and Palestinians opposed to the expanding Israeli colonization of East Jerusalem. The latest bone of contention is a plan approved by Jerusalem City Council on June 21 to build an Israeli recreation centre in the Arab neighbourhood of Silwan and demolish 22 Palestinian homes. According to the Israeli Committee Against Housing Demolitions (ICAHD), the building of the centre, to be called “The King’s Garden,” may eventually displace over 1000 Palestinians. Yesterday, Palestinians threw stones and paint at Israeli colonists’ cars.

International reaction to the plan’s announcement has been critical. US State Department spokesman Philip Cowley said it “undermines trust that is fundamental to making progress in the proximity talks.” UN Secretary Ban Ki-Moon said the plan violates international law. The international community has long opposed Israel’s military occupation and colonization of East Jerusalem. Palestinians intend to make East Jerusalem the capital of the independent Palestinian state that they aspire to establish.

The plan has also provoked criticism within Israel. On July 1, Israel’s *Peace Now* movement and *Meretz*, a centre-left political party, launched a campaign against Jerusalem mayor Nir Barkat, a secular right-winger who is promoting the King’s Garden plan. At the launch of the campaign—called “Barkat is giving Jerusalem – to the settlers”—former cabinet minister Yossi Sarid said that it was time for a mayoral candidate who openly supports the division of Jerusalem in order to achieve peace and “save” the city. *Meretz* was the only party in Barkat’s municipal coalition to vote against the King’s Garden plan. Barkat responded by expelling the three *Meretz* city council members from his coalition and firing the deputy mayor, Pepe Alalu—also a *Meretz* member.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) condemns the King’s Garden plan. “Over 24,145 Palestinian homes have been demolished since 1967, according to ICAHD,” says CJPME President Thomas Woodley. “The ‘King’s Garden’ plan is part and parcel of a strategy to consolidate Israeli control over Palestinian territory and to fast-track Judaization of East Jerusalem. The Fourth Geneva Convention prohibits occupying forces from moving their own people into the territory they militarily occupy,” Woodley notes. An estimated 200,000 Jewish Israelis have moved to East Jerusalem since Israel militarily occupied it and the West Bank in 1967. Israel seldom grants permits to build or repair Palestinian homes in East Jerusalem. It considers those built without its permission illegal, and those in ill-repair to be violating its building codes. In either situation, it often demolishes the homes.

Palestinian residents of the El-Bustan, the sector of Silwan where the 22 homes to soon be demolished are located, have said they will seek Israeli and international support to stop the demolitions.

**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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