



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

## **Tories, Liberals, compete to demonstrate blind support for Israel**

Montreal, Nov. 20<sup>th</sup>, 2009 – On Thursday, November 19<sup>th</sup>, Liberal Leader Michael Ignatieff reacted strongly to a Conservative leaflet that seemed to depict the Liberal Party as an inconsistent supporter of Israel, and by extension, not strong enough for Canada’s Jewish community. Earlier this week, Canadian households in ridings with large Jewish populations received leaflets, also known as a “ten-percenter”, from Conservative members of parliament, comparing the Conservative and Liberal parties’ records on combating anti-Semitism and support for Israel, and claiming that the Conservative Party is the party the Jewish community can count on for its full support.

The leaflet, which lauds the Conservative record on Anti-Semitism, fighting terrorism, and support for Israel, while depicting the Liberals as soft on these themes, has prompted Mr. Ignatieff and his party to defend its position regarding Israel. The Liberal leader was quoted as saying “The Liberal Party has stood shoulder-to-shoulder with the state of Israel since 1948 [...]” The Liberals, NDP and others across Canada have criticized the Conservative Party’s use of its parliamentary privilege of tax-payer funded mailouts, suggesting that it is inappropriate to use this privilege to send highly-partisan, attack-type leaflets, especially to citizens outside their respective ridings.

CJPME believes that anti-Semitism, like racism of any kind, is deplorable and should be opposed. Nevertheless, the Conservative and Liberal parties, caught in a game of one-upmanship for the support of Canada’s Jewish community, continue to confuse criticism of Israel with anti-Semitism. “First, Canadians must be free to critique behaviour which runs contrary to Canadian and universal values. Second, Canada’s Jewish community has a wide variety of opinions regarding Israel. There are many Jews in Canada that are critical of Israel”, says Thomas Woodley, President of CJPME. “Canadian political parties should be attempting to build bridges amongst Canada’s diverse communities, not distributing material that divides them.”

In light of the UN Goldstone report – produced following Israel’s 22-day assault on Gaza last winter – which detailed extensive evidence that Israel committed war crimes, and possibly crimes against humanity, unquestioning Canadian support for Israel contradicts its traditional support for human rights and support for international law. Woodley continues, “I find it very difficult to believe that at a time when the majority of the international community is calling for investigations into what happened during Israel’s invasion of Gaza, our leaders are arguing over which party is more blindly supportive of Israel.”

**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.*

For more information, please contact Grace Batchoun at 514-745-8491 or [grace.batchoun@cjpmc.org](mailto:grace.batchoun@cjpmc.org).

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East

[www.cjpmc.org](http://www.cjpmc.org)

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