

Not in Our Name (NION): Jewish Voices Against Israel's Wars

We came together to form the Not In Our Name (NION) network in Toronto, Ontario, during the summer of 2006, in solidarity with the people of Lebanon and Palestine against Israel's wars and in opposition to the complicity of the Canadian government with Israel's criminal actions.

Our basic principles are:

- 1. Jewish voices.** We are Jewish Canadians who oppose Israel's wars, and Israel's expropriation of Palestinian indigenous lands from 1948 to the present. For centuries prior to such expropriation, Jews and Arabs lived in peace in the region. This expropriation must be acknowledged and its effects, to the extent possible, halted and reversed if there is to be peace once again.
- 2. Against Israeli apartheid.** We reject the state of Israel's enforcement of apartheid-like, racist laws that offer privileges to Jews while assigning non-citizenship status to non-Jews, in particular to Arab Palestinians. We oppose the so-called "Law of Return" that offers any Jewish person, from anywhere in the world, the "right" to live and work with full citizenship in the Israeli state, while denying this to expelled Palestinians. We support the right of the indigenous Palestinian population, forced to flee as refugees, to return to their lands, and to receive the fullest possible compensation for their losses in accordance with international law. A democratic secular state that does not enact racist laws holds the only promise that Jews and Arabs, Palestinians and Israelis, can live in peace.
- 3. We know anti-Semitism, and we oppose it.** We are no strangers to anti-Semitism – in this sense meaning anti-Jewish racism – in Canada and in other countries around the world. Among us are Holocaust survivors and family members of survivors. We and members of our immediate families have suffered discrimination that has forced us to abandon our homes and flee for our lives; to change our names in hopes that we can "pass" as non-Jews; to hide from authorities for fear of risking torture or death. We have witnessed prospects for education and employment vanish for ourselves and for our families. All because of our Jewish identity. But we find no solace from anti-Semitism, no safe haven, in the establishment and existence of a "Jewish state". As horrendous as the experience of the Jewish Holocaust was, there is no compensation for anti-Semitism in the creation of an ethnically-exclusive state. Instead, we identify with civil rights movements that have organized and built solidarity to resist racism in all its forms wherever it occurs.
- 4. Judaism is not Zionism.** We understand that Judaism, a religion and/or cultural identity, is not the same as Zionism. Zionism stands for an exclusive Jewish nation-state. Jews – like Christians, Muslims, Buddhists, or those who adhere to any faith – are in no way a single, homogenous population. There are no grounds to assume that all Jews share a single view towards the state of Israel. A number of high profile, well-financed Zionist organizations – including B'Nai Brith, the Canadian Jewish Congress, the Canadian Jewish Political Affairs Committee, the Canada-Israel Committee, and the Friends of the Simon Wiesenthal Centre – claim to represent the Jewish community in Canada. They do not. What they share is a Zionist political stance, an unconditional defense of the policies of the state of Israel. These organizations speak and act for themselves alone, and not in our name.
- 5. Stop the harassment.** Some Zionist organizations and individuals have falsely charged that solidarity with Palestinian human rights, and opposition to the policies of the state of Israel are tantamount to anti-Semitism. There is no legitimacy to such an equation. Israel is a political entity, a national state, not a house of worship. Zionist organizations or individuals have carried out campaigns of harassment in an attempt to silence legitimate and democratically expressed opposition to the policies and practices of the state of Israel. Such harassment denies freedom of speech and threatens to de-legitimize the Palestinian struggle for human rights. The false charges of anti-Semitism also trivialize the actual experiences of anti-Jewish racism.

The list of overt acts of harassment and interference is extensive. Some recent targets include: democratic labour union processes, where motions of solidarity with the international campaign of boycott, divestment and

sanctions against Israel have been advanced (CUPE, May 2006 and OSSTF, January 2007); faith organizations that have adopted campaigns for boycott of Israeli products from illegally occupied Palestinian land (United Church Toronto Conference, June 2006); elected Members of Parliament who visited Lebanon and called for negotiation to advance peace in the region (MPs Mr. Wrzesnewskyj, Ms. Nash and Ms. Mourani, August 2006); students and professors who criticize the state of Israel and who oppose interference in university affairs by Zionist organizations (York University, 2003-2006); artistic and literary expressions (“My Name is Rachel Corrie”, Katherine Viner and Alan Rickman, 2006; *Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak*, by Deborah Ellis, 2006).

6. Crimes of the Israeli state. The attempt to silence dissenting and critical voices belies and obscures Israel’s actions on the ground. It is a myth that Israel was founded on “a land without a people.” In 1948, 800,000 Palestinians were uprooted, 531 villages destroyed and 11 urban neighbourhoods emptied of their inhabitants. As a result of Israel’s wars of 1948 and 1967, there are over 4.3 million Palestinian refugees living in countries in the Middle East. There are an estimated 7.2 million Palestinian refugees worldwide. In Israel, 93 percent of land is reserved for Jews only. Since the 1967 war and illegal occupation of Palestinian territory, 12,000 homes have been demolished and 180,000 olive trees uprooted. Israel maintains control of all land, sea, and air access. Palestinians living in Israel are treated as third class citizens, while Israel exerts total control over Palestinians living in the Occupied Territories, where 75 percent live on less than \$2/day. 450,000 Israelis have moved into Palestinian territory on the West Bank, while East Jerusalem, Gaza and the West Bank are under siege. The Apartheid Wall, illegally under construction, will mean that some 50,000 Palestinian farmers will be trapped, separated from their land and access to water. Israel controls and restricts Palestinian access to water, which has had a devastating effect on agriculture.

7. Oppose Canadian government complicity. The Canadian government has been among the most aggressive in defending the criminal actions of the Israeli state. In July 2004, 150 states in the UN General Assembly voted to demand that Israel comply with the ruling of the International Court of Justice that found Israel’s construction of the Apartheid Wall illegal. Canada, then led by Paul Martin’s Liberals, shamefully was one of only ten countries to abstain. In March 2006, Prime Minister Stephen Harper’s Conservative government made Canada the first country outside of Israel to cut off financial aid to the democratically elected Palestinian Authority government of Hamas. In July 2006, as thousands of innocent Lebanese citizens suffered untold death and injury under Israeli military attack, Stephen Harper declared Israel’s response as “measured”. While Zionist organizations and supporters have pressured the Canadian government to take such positions, we and many Jewish Canadians condemn this complicity. Instead, we support the calls for solidarity in challenging Israel’s wars and occupations that have come from over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations and are endorsed by prominent Israelis and human rights groups, for a comprehensive international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions. Both Israel and Canada must be held accountable to international law and international standards of human rights.

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More information can be found at:

Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid caiaweb.org

Electronic Intifada electronicintifada.net

Electronic Lebanon electroniclebanon.net

Grassroots Palestinian Anti-apartheid Wall Campaign stopthewall.org

Jewish Voices for Peace jewishvoiceforpeace.org