



## CUPE ONTARIO'S RESOLUTION 50: **Towards peace and justice in the Middle East**

### **Q What is Resolution 50?**

**A** Delegates to the 2006 CUPE Ontario convention voted almost unanimously on Resolution 50, which supports the international campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until that state recognizes the Palestinian right to self-determination.

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### **Q Why is CUPE involved in this issue?**

**A** CUPE members have identified the Israeli-Palestinian conflict as a priority, particularly as Israel has violated more U.N. resolutions than any other country. Its policies are devastating Palestinian livelihoods and jobs in the same sectors that we, as CUPE members, defend here in Canada: education, health and social, community and municipal services.

CUPE has a proud history of solidarity and in fact, the national constitution of CUPE mandates us to do international solidarity work. Our International Solidarity Committee campaigns on many issues to support struggles for justice and workers' rights around the world in places like Venezuela, Columbia, Egypt and Afghanistan.

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### **Q Is Divestment from Israel Anti-Semitic?**

**A** Absolutely not. Anti-Semitism goes against the very principles that are the foundation of this movement: justice, equality, human rights, and peace for all peoples. In fact, many courageous Jewish and Israeli voices support the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions.

It is important to separate Israeli policies from the Jewish people in Israel and abroad. Divestment and boycott campaigns target Israeli, not Jewish, products.

While Resolution 50 is part of a campaign to change the Israeli state's treatment of Palestinian people, CUPE Ontario supports the right of Israel to exist in a viable two-state solution. This is inherent in a 2003 policy of CUPE National that states that it will "help develop a peace process based on equality between Israelis and Palestinians and based on the implementation of United Nations Resolutions and international law."

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### **Q What is Canada's role?**

**A** Today the Canadian government is one of the most vocal supporters of Israel in the world. This is the same government that attacks our rights as workers in Canada. CUPE's Resolution 50 has stood in stark contrast to our government position and has been recognized worldwide.

Since 1993, Canada has contributed some \$310 million in aid to the Palestinian Authority (PA), amounting to an average of \$23.8 million in aid yearly. Canada became the first country after Israel to cut funding to the PA following the democratic election of the Hamas Government, which the Harper government considers a terrorist organization. Announced on 30 March 2006, the funding cut meant an immediate loss of \$7.3 million in direct assistance to programs tied to the PA. Over 86 % of the aid was destined for a housing rehabilitation project in the West Bank and Gaza.<sup>1</sup>

Canada also maintains a free trade agreement (FTA) with Israel as one of a number of FTAs with international partners.<sup>2</sup>



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## Q How can justice be sought in the region?

**A** Carl Rosenberg, the Editor of the Canadian Jewish Outlook has said, “The Israeli-Palestinian conflict is one of the most bitter conflicts of modern times, involving two peoples, each with a right to self-determination. However the overall situation is not symmetrical. The persistence of the conflict is a result of the continuing dispossession and occupation of one nation by the other.”<sup>3</sup>

Israel holds a dominant role as a superpower in this conflict, buoyed by the world’s fourth strongest military and a highly developed economy.

Boycott, divestment and sanctions comprise a non-violent and peaceful strategy aimed at bringing justice and therefore peace to the region. Just calling for an end to violence is not good enough. We have the power to apply economic and moral political pressure and that is why CUPE has adopted Resolution 50.

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## Q ‘The Right of Return’: What would it mean?

**A** When Israel was created in 1948, about 750,000 Palestinians fled or were expelled during the “War of Independence”. Israel was formed and it conquered all of Palestine, except the West Bank and Gaza Strip. It now controlled 78% of Palestine instead of the U.N. allotted 56%. U.N. Resolution 194 mandated the Palestinian right of return inside the state of Israel. Canada has voted to abide by Resolution 194.<sup>4</sup>

Essentially, the ‘right of return’ would end the way in which the Israeli state uses its laws to discriminate against Palestinians, in areas including land, laws, services, housing, jobs, documentation and human rights.

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## Q What is the link between investment and Israel’s policies?

**A** We should not provide support to Israel’s apartheid-like practices — nor should we benefit from them. By cutting these ties, we show that racism, occupation and discrimination is not acceptable.

Some investments have very direct links to the Israeli occupation of the Palestinian territories and the oppression of Palestinian people. For example:

- Caterpillar bulldozers are routinely used to demolish Palestinian homes;
- Hewlett Packard owns part of the Technion Institute in Israel, a prestigious college that discriminates against Arab students and develops high-tech weaponry for the Israeli military.

Palestinian workers have set up a picket line — asking us not to provide support to the Israeli occupation. The divestment and boycott tactic can be an effective weapon, as was demonstrated in South Africa.

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## Resources

<sup>1</sup> “ Hamas headache: What about aid? Canada advised not to cut funding ‘Can’t abandon’ Palestinian people.” *Toronto Star*, February 1, 2006. pg A10; and “Slam Hamas, not aid.” *Toronto Star*, March 31, 2006. pg A18.

All aspects of the funding cut are summarized at <http://www.acdi-cidAgc.ca/CIDAWEB/acdicidAnsf/En/JOS-42618224-U8U>

<sup>2</sup> “Canadian Policy on Key Issues in the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict” Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, <http://www.dfait-maeci.gc.ca>

<sup>3</sup> “Voices of Dissent — The ‘other Israel’” by Carl Rosenberg; “The Wall Must Fall: End the Occupation and the violence in Israel-Palestine”, CUPE BC, June 2005.

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