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CJPME Condemns Israeli Arrest of outspoken academic Norman Finkelstein

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

TORONTO, May 23, 2008 / – Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) strongly condemns the arrest of prominent US academic Dr. Norman Finkelstein by Israel as he attempted to enter Israeli Occupied Palestinian Territories Friday. According to the news outlet *Democracy Now* and Dr. Finkelstein's website, the academic was immediately arrested when he arrived in Tel Aviv early Friday and was told that he is further banned from Israel for ten years. Dr. Finkelstein is expected to be deported tomorrow.

Finkelstein just completed a highly successful tour here in Canada, hosted by CJPME, in which he spoke to large audiences in Montreal, Toronto and Ottawa; he then continued with a tour of Europe before entering Israel. CJPME believes that freedom of speech is an essential component of any democracy. This incident undermines Israel's supposed commitment to democratic principles by denying freedom of thought on political issues, especially in the Palestinian Territories it occupies.

Dr. Finkelstein's outspoken criticism of Israeli policies against the Palestinians has recently placed him on a U.S. Terrorist List, he believes. "The beauty about being a Canadian is that we enjoy important freedoms that are denied to others," CJPME's Thomas Woodley said earlier. "We hope that Canada, being a democracy, will encourage Israel to respect dissenting views, especially in regards to territories it is occupying illegally, by allowing Dr. Finkelstein to express his crucial message that has been so well-received here in Canada and elsewhere around the world."

Israel is often praised as being a liberal democracy in the Middle East, and CJPME hopes that Israel will do its utmost—as befits a democracy—to retract Dr. Finkelstein's arrest. CJPME also calls on Israel to treat Dr. Finkelstein with respect and dignity. "We expect and swift and just resolution to this situation," offered Woodley.

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About CJPME

CJPME is a pan-Canadian grassroots advocacy organization uniting Canadians of all backgrounds who believe in justice, peace and security for all people in the Middle East. CJPME seeks to positively influence Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East and Canadian media coverage of the events and peoples of the region. CJPME values Canada's historical role as a neutral broker in the Middle East, and wants to promote

better understanding among Canadians of Middle Eastern issues and dynamics.

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