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CJPME welcomes landmark Quebec Lawsuit

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTREAL, July 16, 2008 / – CJPME applauds a lawsuit filed July 9 against two Quebec companies, Green Park International and Green Mount International. The companies have been constructing and selling residential units in the illegal Israeli colonies of Upper Modiin in the Occupied Palestinian Territories, in violation of international law.

The construction is occurring on land that was seized by Israel from the village of Bil'in during Israel's 1967 invasion of the West Bank. Upper Modiin is Israel's largest illegal colony.

The petition, filed by the Bil'in Village Council's Canadian lawyer, Mark Arnold, seeks a Supreme Court of Quebec declaration that the construction of the units in an illegal settlement is unlawful. It also demands the cessation of the illegal building as well as reparation for injury, under the Quebec Charter of Human Rights and Freedoms and the Civil Code of Quebec. Finally, the lawsuit petitions the Canadian courts to stop all construction as well as the demolition of the 250 apartments constructed thus far.

"Article 49 of the Fourth Geneva convention forbids an occupying power from transferring its own civilians onto occupied territories," explains Wendy Phillips of CJPME. "Indeed, such transfer of settlers is classified as a war crime, according to both the Rome Statute of the International Criminal Court and Canada's Crimes Against Humanity and War Crimes Act of 2000."

According to the suit, the construction of residential units on Palestinian land for the purpose of housing Israeli colonists demonstrates that the Quebec defendants are 'aiding, abetting, assisting, and conspiring with Israel.'

Continues Phillips, "The United Nations' Commission on Human Rights also makes clear that transnational corporations, like Green Mount and Green Park, 'have the obligation to promote...ensure respect of and protect human rights recognized in international as well as national law.'"

CJPME welcomes the Bil'in initiative, as it serves as a reminder of Canada's obligations under international law. As recently as 2007, Foreign Affairs Canada affirmed its support for the Fourth Geneva Convention and acknowledged that "Israeli settlements in the occupied territories are a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. The settlements also constitute a serious obstacle to achieving a comprehensive, just and lasting peace."

Tom Woodley, President of CJPME suggests that all Canadians should welcome this landmark case. "Canadian corporations need to be held to the legal standards set out by international law and supported by the Canadian government itself. We call on the Quebec and Canadian legal systems to accept this case and apply our government's stated commitments to international law."

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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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