

Contact: Grace Batchoun
Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East
Telephone: (514) 745-8491

CJPME reiterates need for Canadian response on Israeli Colonies

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTREAL, August 1, 2008 – Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) reiterates its call for Canada to discourage Israel's continued colonization of the Occupied Palestinian Territories. According to Canada's Department of Foreign Affairs, the Canadian government views the Israeli colonies (a.k.a. "settlements") in the West Bank as a violation of the Fourth Geneva Convention. Nevertheless, Israeli colony expansion continued this week, with 20 more units announced for a remote Israeli colony on Palestinian land in the Jordan valley.

U.S. Secretary of State Condoleezza Rice this week described ongoing Israel colony construction as "a big problem," and lead Palestinian peace negotiator Ahmed Qurei called it, "a very bad message about [the Israeli] intention of reaching an agreement." The cessation of Israeli colony growth has been central to every peace deal of the past 15 years between Israel and the Palestinians. The Israeli colony to be expanded, Maskiyot, is in a remote area in which it was understood that Israeli development would ultimately be vacated under a peace deal.

"Canada must provide a consistent message to the state of Israel," contended Thomas Woodley of CJPME. "If our official position stands against Israeli colonization of Palestinian territory, and if we support the Road Map Peace Plan, under which Israel supposedly agreed to stop colony expansion, then we must act." In addition to an official reproach, Canada has bilateral agreements with Israel which it could threaten to terminate or modify if Israel continues to act in violation of international law and the international consensus.

"Canada also has an opportunity to show where it stands on this issue by agreeing to hear a court case recently filed in Quebec Superior Court," says Woodley. "We have a 'cut and dry' example in which Canada can exercise its commitment to international law by allowing the case to move forward." The lawsuit has been filed on behalf of a Palestinian village against two Montreal-registered companies who are alleged to have constructed, marketed and sold colonist units in the Occupied Palestinian Territories. The case cites several instruments of international and Canadian law, including Article 49(6) of the Fourth Geneva Convention which prohibits an occupying power – in this case Israel – from transferring its citizens to territory it occupies militarily.

CJPME believes that this recent court case will serve as a critical test as to whether Canada has the will to apply the principles of international which it has incorporated into its legal framework. CJPME holds the support for international law as one of its key policy pillars.

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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.

For more information, please contact:

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www.cjpme.ca