

Independent Jewish Voices supports United Church members' right to make their own decision on boycott, free from threats

Group condemns pressure from Canadian senators, pro-Israel lobbyists

“Independent Jewish Voices Canada (IJV) strongly condemns the attempt by politicians and lobbyists acting on behalf of the Israeli government to prevent members of the United Church of Canada from taking the kind of action they deem appropriate to bring this decades-old crisis to an end,” said IJV spokesperson Sid Shniad, speaking from Vancouver.

He was referring to a warning from a group of nine senators that the Church could spark a rift with members of the Jewish community if its members endorse calls for the boycott of goods manufactured in Israeli settlements situated in occupied Palestinian territory. The issue will come to a vote at the Church's national conference in Ottawa in mid-August.

A Church working group has issued a report calling for a boycott of products from Israeli settlements situated in occupied Palestinian lands must be targeted, pointing out that they violate international law and contravene both United Nations resolutions and Canadian government policy. Backers of the resolution believe that by confiscating Palestinian land the settlements are undermining the possibility of a just resolution to the conflict.

“IJV rejects the senators' contention that the Church should remain silent on this issue,” Shniad continued. “We agree with the report's conclusion that there is no excuse for silence with regard to this occupation. The report's statement that Israel is maintaining a harsh occupation that must be brought to an end by exerting pressure on it is incontestable. Furthermore, this position is gaining support from a growing number of international organizations, as well as our own,” Shniad explained.

“It is the job of organizations like the Centre for Israel and Jewish Affairs (CIJA) to run interference for the Israeli government, so it is not surprising that they express outrage at the very idea of anyone taking action against the settlements,” Shniad explained. “By asking why the committee's report focuses on Israel when there are Christian communities in the Middle East under threat, they are attempting to deflect attention from the issue of Israel's illegal behaviour.”

“CIJA should realize that the committee's recommendations constitute in part an attempt to address the call for help issued by Christian church leaders in Jerusalem in 2009 in the form of the Kairos Palestine Document. That call, which described the desperate plight of Christians living under Israeli occupation, endorsed boycott and disinvestment as non-violent tools for justice, peace and security for all.”

“By issuing this threat to the Church, the senators and the pro-Israel lobbyists are effectively demanding that the plea for help in pursuit of justice for all contained in the Kairos Palestine Document be ignored by Church members,” Shniad concluded.

For further information:

Sid Shniad (604) 314-5589 (cell)

www.independentjewishvoices.ca

Independent Jewish Voices – Canada is a national organization that promotes a just resolution to the conflict in Israel and Palestine through the application of international law and respect for the human rights of all parties. IJV has chapters in Halifax, Montreal, Ottawa, Toronto, Hamilton, Winnipeg, Saskatoon, Vancouver and Victoria.