



## **What is Indigo Books and Music Inc.?**

Founded in 1996, Indigo Books and Music Inc., a Canadian Company, became the largest Canadian book retail chain at the time of its merger with Chapters Inc. in August 2010. With over 250 stores in ten provinces and one territory, Indigo is the third largest book retailer in North America. This monopolistic company sells under the banners *Chapters*, *The World's Biggest Bookstore*, *Coles*, *SmithBooks*, *Indigospirit*, *The Book Company*, *Pistachio*, and *chapters.indigo.ca*. Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz are a couple: she is founder and CEO of the company, while he is president of Onex Inc., and member of the board of directors at Indigo. Between them, they control 68% of the assets of the company Indigo Books and Music Inc. With a net turnover of more than \$968 million in 2010<sup>1</sup>, any purchase at Indigo Books and Music generates income for Reisman and Schwartz.

## **What is the HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers?**

Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz established the *HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers* in 2005 to encourage foreign soldiers to join the Israeli army and continue their studies in Israel. By issuing scholarships on behalf of the HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers, Reisman and Schwartz hope to demonstrate their gratitude and support for the hundreds of « Lone Soldiers » who left their country to join the Israeli military forces. Each year, the HESEG foundation rewards hundreds of “Lone Soldiers” with more than \$3 million worth of scholarships for further academic studies in Israel.<sup>2</sup>

## **Why boycott Indigo Books and Music Inc.?**

By supporting and rewarding the « Lone Soldiers », Reisman and Schwartz by means of Indigo Books and Music Inc., indirectly support Israel military efforts in the occupation of the Palestinian territories. While accepting the value of educational scholarships, the HESEG Foundation is criticized for the choice of entry criteria of these scholarships. To be eligible, the immigrant to Israel must join the Israeli occupation forces, and complete his term of active service.

Unlike Israeli citizens, the « Lone Soldiers » are under no civil obligation to participate in the Israeli army. On the contrary, they volunteer to participate in Israel's occupation forces. The HESEG Foundation, promising financial assistance, thus encourages individuals to take part in the occupation. Like Israeli soldiers, « Lone Soldiers » may participate in military activities at various checkpoints that restrict Palestinian movement while strengthening the occupation of Palestinian lands. The HESEG Foundation thus encourages individuals to participate in activities which are illegal under the *Fourth Geneva Convention*, the *Hague Convention* and several other related instruments of international law (e.g. *The Convention against Torture and Other Cruel, Inhuman or Degrading Treatment or Punishment*<sup>3</sup>, etc.)

Moreover, the HESEG Board of Directors makes the selection of scholarship recipients. This Board is composed primarily of members or retirees of the Israeli army, some of which are criticized for major violations of international law under their command. Notably Doron Almog, who escaped arrest in London in 2005 on charges of war crimes.<sup>4</sup> Reisman and Schwartz are therefore directly linked to the Israeli army, and work jointly with it. The Israeli army has shown its gratitude to the foundation by providing the couple with the firearm of a "Lone Soldier" American killed in action during a ceremony praising the importance of foreign troops and the financial support provided by Reisman and Schwartz.<sup>5</sup>

From a legal point of view, the boycott strategy focuses on the Israeli army since it is the subject of such criticism from international institutions following its noncompliance with international human rights and humanitarian law. In effect, the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories is one of the longest occupations in modern history, and is highly criticized because of its ongoing legal violations by international legal bodies. Moreover, according to recommendation C of the *UN Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights*, any involvement by business enterprises in war crimes, crimes against humanity, acts of torture or any violations of international humanitarian law and international are illegal.<sup>6</sup>

According to this principle, the HESEG Foundation must a) not provide any indirect support for the Israeli army; and b) not promote the participation of its beneficiaries in legal violations or war crimes. The HESEG Foundation should neither encourage nor finance the Israeli army and its soldiers, since they indeed pursue the above acts that violate international law. Under the legal norms, the foundation HESEG should ensure soldiers recipient of scholarships do not engage in acts deemed illegal by international law. Nevertheless, a close follow-up would be difficult since a) the Israeli army would not allow it and b) this monitoring would require ongoing and insurmountable overhead for the Foundation.

It is also important to note that in July 2005, over 170 Palestinian organizations have called for a boycott of Israeli products in order to press for recognition of the Palestinians' right of self-determination. While aware of the potential economic impact on Palestinians and Israelis, the boycott seeks to pressure all bodies directly or indirectly supporting the Israeli economy, and particularly the Israeli occupation of Palestinian territories.

## **When will the boycott strategy end?**

The boycott strategy will end if one or more of these following things take place:

- Israel withdraws from the occupied Palestinian territories;
- Reisman and Schwartz withdrawal from the Foundation, or the HESEG Foundation changes its mandate and stops supporting Israeli soldiers;
- Reisman and Schwartz sell their shares in Indigo Books and Music Inc.

## **With the boycott, where else can I buy books apart from Indigo's?**

Despite the breadth of the monopoly of Indigo Books and Music Inc., several other independent shops sell the same items. First, on the Internet, Amazon.ca has a wide variety of books in English and French, and is the main competitor to Indigo Books and Music Inc. Bookscene.ca allows customers to order books through the Internet, and can deliver them anywhere in Canada. There are several local bookstores in every city in Canada offering a wide variety of books that are not affiliated to the company Indigo Books and Music Inc. *www.biblio.ca* shows these bookstores, in each province across Canada.

## **What other ways to put pressure on Indigos?**

Individual action is at the heart of CJPME's boycott campaign. The following are tools and mechanisms established by CJPME through which all concerned citizens can pressure Reisman and Schwartz to withdraw their funding to the HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers.

- CJPME encourages all citizens to participate in the "Boycott Indigo: Action Alert" on [http://www.cjpme.ca/action\\_indigos\\_2010\\_09.shtml](http://www.cjpme.ca/action_indigos_2010_09.shtml). This alert allows people to submit their complaints and questions to the executive members of Indigo Books and Music Inc.
- Templates of ready-to-send letters to the executives and the various branches of Indigos are also available on CJPME's boycott section at <http://www.cjpme.org/consumerboycott.htm>.
- A mechanism to bring together shareholders of Indigo Books and Music Inc. has also been established at <http://www.cjpme.org/bds.htm> to prepare for eventual shareholder initiatives to apply pressure at other levels.

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<sup>1</sup> "Annual report for the 53 weeks period ended April 3, 2010," Indigo Books and Music Inc., April 3, 2010, p.9.

<sup>2</sup> Hazan, Jenny. « Canadians aid lone IDF soldiers » *The Canadian Jewish news*.

<sup>3</sup> To know more about the Israeli occupation army's violations of the international law, see CJPME Factsheet, *The Geneva Conventions and Israeli Activities in the Occupied Territories*, March 2004.

<sup>4</sup> Casciani, Dominic. "Police feared 'airport stand-off'" *BBC news*, February 19, 2010.

<sup>5</sup> Rettig Gur, Haviv. "Fallen lone soldier remembered at Heseq Fund ceremony" *Jerusalem Post*, November 22, 2006.

<sup>6</sup> United Nations: Economic and Social Council. *Norms on the responsibilities of transnational corporations and other business enterprises with regard to human rights. E/CN.4/Sub.2/2003/12/Rev.2.*