



Apologists for Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories and its blockade of Gaza often claim that human rights organizations — including Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) — unfairly single out Israel for criticism. This is false. They also claim that such organizations ignore or tacitly support human rights violations by Palestinians and/or other groups or countries. This too is false.

### **What core principles and beliefs guide CJPME's positions and actions?**

CJPME's positions and day-to-day work are guided by three pillar beliefs: respect for international law; equal expectations of all parties to conflict; and the conviction that violence is not a solution.

### **Does CJPME ignore human rights violations by non-Israeli actors?**

No. CJPME consistently criticizes violations committed by all the actors in the Middle East. The following are just some examples of CJPME positions on the actions of actors other than Israel:

- CJPME criticizes rocket attacks on Israel from militant groups in Gaza<sup>1</sup>
- CJPME condemns Palestinian suicide bombings, in one case saying:  
“CJPME further believes that all acts of violence against civilian populations, whether *suicide bombings* or massive bombardments of civilian areas and infrastructure, constitute grave violations of international law. These should all be condemned as criminal and ineffective means to achieving any political goals. Differences in military capabilities notwithstanding, civilian populations should never be turned into means to a political end; the targeting of civilians by both state and non-state actors only serves to deepen intransigence and intensify the polarization already present in the region.”<sup>2</sup> (italics added)
- CJPME called for the investigation of *both* Palestinians and Israelis following the human rights reports on Israel's operation “Cast Lead” in early 2009.<sup>3</sup>
- CJPME condemned Hamas's temporary seizure of a shipment of rice and flour in February 2009<sup>4</sup>
- CJPME urges Canada to press Iran and Syria to stop providing arms to Hezbollah<sup>5</sup>
- CJPME calls for an end to foreign interference in Lebanon, including by Iran and Syria<sup>6</sup>
- CJPME consistently calls for ceasefires whenever armed conflict between Israel and its militant adversaries has erupted<sup>7</sup>
- CJPME criticizes human rights violations by Fatah—the Palestinian group that runs the Palestinian Authority and those by Hamas, the Palestinian group that administers Gaza—against each others' respective supporters<sup>8</sup>
- CJPME has commented on corruption by the Fatah-led Palestinian Authority<sup>9</sup>
- CJPME comments on the extremist positions held by al-Qaeda and some opposition parties in various Arab-speaking countries.<sup>10</sup>
- CJPME has provided information regarding the lack of democracy in Egypt and its repressive emergency law<sup>11</sup>

### **Why does CJPME focus on Israel and the Palestinians?**

There are several reasons why the situation between Israel and the Palestinians is a central focus of CJPME's work:

- The Israeli-Palestinian conflict greatly affects the stability of the entire region. The resolution of the Israeli-Palestinian conflict is central to the resolution of other tensions in the region. Lebanon and Jordan, for example, would attain much greater stability once a resolution of the Palestinian refugee problem is achieved.

- Israel commits human rights violations ongoing in its occupation of the Palestinian territories. In the process of enforcing Israel's occupation and control of Palestinian territory, Israel elevates tensions in the region with its ongoing human rights violations. Palestinians in Israel are also subjected to severe discrimination and frequent abuses by Israeli authorities, again elevating tensions.
- Palestinian society and economy are devastated by Israel's occupation. The Palestinians are currently one of the region's most impoverished peoples, and Israel's control of the occupied Palestinian territories (OPT) has created and deepens this poverty. Given the fact that Israel continues to severely restrict the socio-economic activity of the Palestinians, this again is a source of tension in the region.

## **Why are CJPME and other rights organizations so critical of Israel?**

Although all violations of international law are to be condemned, the magnitude and gravity of Israel's violations of Palestinian rights far exceeds the magnitude of the violations by militant groups against Israel and its citizens. Therefore it is logical for CJPME and other human rights groups to devote particular attention to such violations. For example, the total number of Israeli fatalities from eight years of rocket fire from Gaza did not exceed 30. Yet the Israeli government claimed that that rocketfire compelled it to initiate a 22-day assault on Dec. 27, 2008 that left over 1400 dead—most of whom were civilians, including at least 300 children. As well, Israel's occupation of Palestinian territories since 1967 is one of the longest occupations in modern history, and as such merits special attention.

Secondly, despite its deplorable human and humanitarian rights record, Israel aspires to a place for itself among liberal Western democracies. It has sought support and preferential status with Europe, Canada and the US based on its claim that it is an island of liberal democracy in a sea of despotism. It is thus quite reasonable to hold Israel to international human rights standards, in the hope that Israel can ultimately be persuaded to improve its human rights record vis-à-vis the Palestinians.

## **Does CJPME question Israel's right to exist?**

No. CJPME believes that Israel is an established presence in the Middle East, and should not fear for its survival. CJPME understands the "two-state solution" – i.e. a Palestinian state co-existing alongside and Israeli state in peace and security – to be the most broadly palatable solution to the current conflict. Implicit in this is the concept and ethical stance that Israel must continue to exist, despite the fact that Israel's founding involved the dispossession of another people: the Palestinians. However, because CJPME believes that Israel's dispossession of the Palestinians – both in Israel and the OPT – is ongoing and intensifying, CJPME believes it is increasingly important that Israel cease its human rights violations. Such a position, nonetheless, could never be equated with a suggestion to dismantle or otherwise threaten Israel's existence.

<sup>1</sup> See CJPME's Position Paper "Humanitarian & Political Crisis in Gaza," January 12, 2008; see also CJPME's Factsheet "Qassam Rocket attacks from Gaza," Jan. 2009

<sup>2</sup> See CJPME's Position Paper, "Meeting the Challenge, A CJPME Proposal for Canada's Middle East Policy," August 2009, pp 23-24.

<sup>3</sup> See CJPME's Position Paper, "Responding to recent Human Rights Reports on Gaza," Dec., 2009

<sup>4</sup> See CJPME's press release: "Canadian position on humanitarian relief to Gaza an enigma," Feb. 16, 2007

<sup>5</sup> See CJPME's Position Paper "Israeli-Hezbollah Cross-border Violence", July 2006.

<sup>6</sup> See CJPME's Position Paper "For a Relevant and Positive Canadian Middle East Policy," June 2007

<sup>7</sup> See CJPME press release, "Civilian deaths mount in Gaza attacks," January 5, 2009; see also CJPME's Position Paper, "Israeli-Hezbollah Cross-Border Violence," July, 2006; and also CJPME's Position Paper, "Israel's unacceptable war on Gaza," Jan. 8, 2009

<sup>8</sup> See CJPME's press release, "CJPME echoes concerns raised in Human Rights Watch Report concerning Palestinian Factions," July 31, 2008

<sup>9</sup> See CJPME Factsheet #12 "Hamas and the 2006 Palestinian elections," February 2006.

<sup>10</sup> See CJPME Position Paper, "Meeting the Challenge, A CJPME Proposal for Canada's Middle East Policy," August 2009. pp. 10-11.

<sup>11</sup> See CJPME Factsheet #90 "Egypt in a Post-Mubarak Environment," July 2010