



– FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE –

Growing number of performers choosing to boycott Israel

Montreal, June 28, 2010 – Despite Israel’s best efforts to spin its controversial recent actions as “self-defence,” an increasing number of performing artists and other cultural figures around the world are taking a different stance. In the last few weeks alone, four more performers have cancelled their concerts in Israel, lengthening the growing list of artists and academics objecting to Israel’s recent actions.

American singer and rap poet Gil Scott Heron—an iconic figure in the American anti-racism movement and the cultural boycott of apartheid South Africa during the 70s and 80s—startled crowds during an April 24 concert at London’s Royal Festival Hall by announcing he was cancelling his upcoming concert in Tel Aviv. But it was Elvis Costello who stunned the media and his fans when he announced in mid-May that he was cancelling two summer performances in Israel, saying his decision was a “matter of instinct and conscience.” Unlike Scott-Heron, Costello is not seen as a “political” singer. Prior to Costello, Santana had also cancelled a performance. The last several weeks saw performances in Israel cancelled by the Gorillaz Sound System, the Klaxons and the Pixies.

As well, the union representing the UK’s 120,000 university teachers and related staff passed a motion May 31 supporting the international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign. Growing lists of academics in Canada (over 300) and the US (over 470) have called for a boycott, including such notables as McGill theologian Gregory Baum and veteran U of T scientist Ursula Franklin. American writers Barbara Ehrenreich and Adrienne Rich have endorsed the *US Campaign for the Academic and Cultural Boycott of Israel*, launched in the wake of the 22-day Israeli assault on Gaza that left over 1400 Gazans dead, most of them civilians. That campaign currently has over 600 endorsers within the US, and another 80 endorsers from academics outside of the US.

Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) welcomes all of these decisions, and urges other performing artists and academics to follow suit. “Cultural boycotts are an effective and non-violent means for the international community to indicate that it finds the conduct of a government unacceptable,” says CJPME President Thomas Woodley. “The ongoing occupation of Palestinian territory by Israel – repeatedly condemned by the international community – and last year’s assault on Gaza have put Israel’s human rights record firmly on the radar.” CJPME encourages other performers and artists to take a stance on Israeli violations of human and humanitarian rights.

The Israeli regime seems more and more concerned about the growing boycott movement. Last week, a bill was introduced by legislators in the Israeli Knesset to make boycotting Israel a crime, and to fine and penalize individuals – both Israeli and foreign nationals – who promote the boycott.

About CJPME – *Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME) is a non-profit and secular organization bringing together men and women of all backgrounds who labour to see justice and peace take root again in the Middle East. Its mission is to empower decision-makers to view all sides with fairness and to promote the equitable and sustainable development of the region.*

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Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East www.cjpme.org

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