

– For Immediate Release –

Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions Campaign against Israeli Apartheid Moves Forward as 600 People Attend Landmark Conference in Toronto

October 9, 2006

(Toronto, October 9, 2006) – Over 600 people attended the landmark conference, *Boycotting Israeli Apartheid: The Struggle Continues*, held from 6-8 October in Toronto, Canada. The conference represents a watershed moment in the Palestinian solidarity movement, with leading anti-apartheid activists from Palestine, South Africa, Canada and England addressing the way forward in the global campaign of boycott, divestment and sanctions.

Jamal Juma', coordinator of the Stop the Wall Campaign in Palestine, told the opening night that the burgeoning boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) movement represents a powerful and practical act of solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. He emphasized that this movement would succeed as it had in South Africa, "We promise you we will not give up. We will stand firm on our land; Israeli apartheid will fall."

Salim Vally, chair of the Palestine Solidarity Committee in South Africa, gave a powerful analysis of Israeli apartheid and its resemblance to the South African situation. He stressed that the solidarity movement to isolate the South African apartheid regime was built by grassroots and popular forces organized throughout the world. That same challenge faces the Palestinian boycott, divestment and sanctions movement today.

Betty Hunter, General Secretary of the UK Palestine Solidarity Campaign, and Jonathan Rosenhead, Emeritus Professor at the London School of Economics and member of the British Committee for Universities in Palestine, spoke to the conference on the lessons of Palestine solidarity work in England. Discussions focused on the boycott campaign launched by British academics against Israeli apartheid as well as the growing support amongst British trade unionists for a BDS campaign.

The conference was organized by the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA), a broad movement formed in response to the call by 171 Palestinian civil-society organizations in July 2005 for the international community to implement a comprehensive boycott, divestment and sanctions (BDS) strategy against apartheid Israel as the focal point of solidarity efforts with the Palestinian people.

The conference developed a detailed program to move the BDS campaign forward in different sectors. Over 75 people attended a lively session on labor and the campaign against Israeli apartheid, in which veteran anti-apartheid activists from the South African struggle presented lessons on how to build support for the campaign among workers and in trade unions. A Canada-wide student network was launched to deepen the BDS movement on campuses across the country. Individuals from different areas throughout Toronto formed neighborhood committees to carry the campaign forward at a local level. Workshops were also held on media, research, art and cultural boycott, and faith-based communities.

Robert Lovelace, Co-Chief of the Ardoch Algonquin First Nation, closed the conference with a powerful comparison of the experience of colonialism in Canada and Palestine. He expressed his solidarity with the Palestinian movement for self-determination, and pledged to continue to strengthen the links between indigenous activists in Canada and the Palestine solidarity movement.

To become involved in the campaign against Israeli apartheid, contact CAIA at endapartheid@riseup.net or through www.caiaweb.org.

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