

MEDIA ADVISORY

- For Immediate Distribution -

Information Pickets in Toronto and Montreal to Protest Indigo Books' Majority Shareholder Support for the Israeli Defense Forces

What: Information pickets will be held in Toronto and Montreal to launch a boycott of Indigo & Chapters bookstores (officially operating under the corporate name Indigo Books & Music Inc.) and its subsidiaries, SmithBooks, Coles, The Book Company, Indigospirit and Worlds Biggest Bookstore.

Date: Saturday, December 23, 2006

Time: 12:00PM

Where: TORONTO - The Indigo Books at 55 Bloor St. W (Bay and Bloor).
MONTREAL - The Indigo Books at 1500 McGill College (at the entrance on St. Catherine, west of McGill College)

Who: The information picket has been called by the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA) and endorsed by Not In Our Name: Jews Against Israel's Wars.

Why: In Gaza and the West Bank, the Israeli military has demolished 12,000 houses since 1967, leaving 70,000 Palestinians homeless. B'Tselem, an Israeli human rights organization, has documented that the Israeli military has killed 1,496 Palestinians since 2004. The vast majority of these are civilian deaths. Unemployment levels have reached up to 70% in some areas of the West Bank and Gaza. There is a massive health crisis and widespread poverty as a result of Israel's deliberate starvation of the Palestinian population.

During the July war, Israeli forces killed 1100 Lebanese through the deliberate bombing of villages, roads and infrastructure. Tens of thousands of Lebanese were wounded and maimed during these attacks, and homes, schools, power plants, hospitals, ports and roads were targeted and destroyed. Israeli forces dropped up to one million cluster bomblets on Lebanon--90% in the last 72 hours when a resolution was imminent. Over 100,000 of these bomblets remain unexploded and Lebanese civilians continue to be killed and maimed on a daily basis.

"These are among the reasons that a national boycott of Indigo/Chapters is being launched to protest majority shareholders Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz's support for the Israeli military," states Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid spokesperson Naomi Binderwall. Reisman is the Founder and CEO of Indigo Books and Music Inc., while Schwartz is the CEO of Onex Corp. Together they own or control over 68% of the shares in Indigo Books and Music Inc.

Schwartz and Reisman founded HESEG: Foundation for Lone Soldiers to provide financial support to individuals who have no family in Israel but decide to join the Israeli military. According to HESEG website (www.lonesoldiers.org.il), “Canadian couple Gerry Schwartz and Heather Reisman established HESEG to express gratitude and provide support to the thousands of Former Lone Soldiers who serve annually in the Israel Defense Forces”. Binderwall explains that “As ‘Lone Soldiers,’ these individuals play an active role in a military that operates checkpoints that restrict Palestinians’ freedom of movement, enforces the occupation of Palestinian lands, arbitrarily detains hundreds of Palestinians each year, and has a documented history of human rights violations.”

At its peak, Heseq intends to distribute up to 3 million dollars a year to Israel’s military effort through its support for former 'Lone Soldiers'.

The Board of Directors of the Foundation for Lone Soldiers is made up of high-ranking active and retired Israeli military personnel. Board member Lt. Colonel Mike Hartmen joined the IDF as a lone soldier and is now “head of the marksmanship and sharpshooters section of the IDF.” Board member Major General (Res.) Doron Almog was Commander of the IDF’s Southern Command from 2000-2003. In 2005, a warrant was issued for his arrest on allegations of war crimes – violating of the Geneva Conventions by ordering the demolition of homes in Rafah, Gaza. Moshe Ronen, Co-Chair of the Canada-Israel Committee, also sits on Heseq’s Board of Directors.

The national boycott of Indigo Books and affiliates is part of an international Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions campaign against the apartheid state of Israel. “The boycott of Indigo Books, which is quite deliberately being launched at the height of holiday shopping season, will continue until Reisman and Schwartz publicly cut ties to Heseq Foundation for Lone Soldiers and thus with the Israel Defense Forces that serve to enforce Israeli apartheid by means of brutality” says Binderwall.

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