

# HESEG Boycott Factsheet

Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz, the majority owners of Chapters Indigo Bookstores, have established a program called the “HESEG Foundation for lone soldiers”. HESEG offers grants of financial support to former ‘lone soldiers’ in the Israeli military to pursue post secondary education in Israel. At its peak, HESEG will distribute \$3M per year to provide scholarships and other support to former ‘lone soldiers’.

This factsheet will describe the organization and aims of HESEG, the relationship of Chapters Indigo Bookstores to HESEG, and how you can participate in the International Boycotts, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) campaign against Israeli apartheid.

## What is HESEG?

HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers was founded in 2005 by Canadian couple Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz. It is an organization that provides financial support to former Israeli ‘lone soldiers’ in pursuit of post-secondary education. It provides successful applicants to the program with full stipends for academic studies, financial support for daily living expenses. Scholarships are granted based on need and military achievement.

## What are “lone soldiers”?

Lone soldiers are individuals who have no family in Israel but who decide to join the Israeli military. As Israeli soldiers, they participate in a military that operates checkpoints, that restricts Palestinian freedom of movement, enforces the occupation of Palestinian land, and has a documented history of human rights violations.

There are between 5000 and 6000 volunteer lone soldiers in the Israeli military from countries around the world.

## What is the purpose of the HESEG Foundation for lone soldiers?

According to their website: “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 Defence Forces.”

By rewarding and supporting Lone Soldiers who have served in the Israeli military, Reisman and Schwartz provide support for Israel’s military effort:

- In explaining how Reisman and Schwartz support the IDF through the HESEG foundation Israeli Defense Minister Shaul Mofaz said at the first HeseG Foundation Grants Awards Ceremony in 2005 that “Encouraging and supporting young individuals from abroad” who have become lone soldiers “directly supports the morale of the IDF”.

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Through the HESEG Foundation for Lone Soldiers, Reisman and Schwartz have participated in ceremonies celebrating Israel’s military, for example:

- In a recent ceremony honouring IDF St. Sgt. Michael Levine, a Lone Soldier from the US who was killed during Israel’s attacks on Lebanon in the summer of 2006, “Levine’s platoon commander handed Levine’s firearm to Canadian business duo and philanthropists Gerry Schwartz and Heather Reisman, the financial backers of the HESEG project.”

*Jerusalem Post November 22 2006*

## Indigo and HESEG

Heather Reisman and Gerry Schwartz, the founders of HESEG, own or control over 68 percent of the shares in Indigo Books and Music Inc. Indigo owns and operates bookstores under the names: Indigo, Chapters, World’s Biggest Bookstore, SmithBooks, Coles, The Book Company and Indigo Spirit.

## HESEG Board

The HESEG Board includes high-ranking Israeli military personnel, government officials, business people and many Canadians.

**MILITARY** • **Major General (Res.) Doron Almog:** Avoided arrest in London in 2005 on suspicion of war crimes. “The former head of Israeli forces in the Gaza Strip said Monday he was warned by diplomats not to leave an aircraft that had landed in London after a tip-off that British police were waiting to arrest him on war crimes charges.” (<http://web.israelinsider.com/Articles/Diplomacy/6580.htm>) Almog was in charge of the Israeli military’s Southern Command when it dropped a one-ton bomb on a house in Gaza killing 14 civilians, nine of them children. • **General (Res.) Yitzhak Eitan:** International Chairman of the “Association for the Wellbeing of Israel’s Soldiers” (AWIS). Chief Commander of the Israeli military in Gaza and the West Bank, and Head (GOC) of the IDF Central Command during the years 2000-2003. • **General Elazar Stern:** Served as Deputy Commander of the Central Brigade in the Central Sector of the Israel-Lebanon border. Commander (Res.) of paratroopers brigade. Commander of the Officers’ School • **Shabtai Shavit:** Head of Mossad (the Israeli foreign intelligence) 1989-96 • **Lieutenant Colonel Mike Hartman:** Head of the Marksmanship and Sharpshooters section of the IDF

**CANADIANS** • **Heather Reisman:** President and CEO of Indigo Books and Music Inc. • **Gerry Schwartz:** President and CEO of ONEX and a director of Indigo Books and Music • **Robert Pritchard:** President and CEO of Torstar Productions (Toronto Star) • **Irving Abella:** Faculty at York University • **Moshe Ronen:** Attorney; Vice-President of the World Jewish Congress, and Chairman of the Board of Canadian Jewish Congress; Co-Chair of the Canada-Israel Committee

## What is the BDS campaign?

On July 9, 2005, a call endorsed by 170 Palestinian civil society organizations was announced. It appeals to the people of the world to impose boycotts, divestments and sanctions (BDS) against Israel until it recognizes the Palestinian people’s inalienable right to self-determination and fully complies with the precepts of international law by:

1. Ending its occupation and colonization of all Arab lands and dismantling the Wall;
2. Recognizing the fundamental rights of the Arab-Palestinian citizens of Israel to full equality; and
3. Respecting, protecting and promoting the rights of Palestinian refugees to return to their homes and properties as stipulated in UN resolution 194.

## What you can do

Don’t shop at Chapters/Indigo and encourage others not to – support independent book retailers.

Contact the board of Indigo demanding a public renunciation of Reisman and Schwartz’ financial support to the HESEG Foundation.

In Toronto, join the weekly picket between 5 and 6 pm outside the Indigo bookstore at Bay and Bloor.

Download a leaflet to distribute outside your local Chapters/Indigo store.

Visit <http://www.caiaweb.org/> or e-mail [endapartheid@riseup.net](mailto:endapartheid@riseup.net) for details and more information

