



## **Canadian Academics for Peace in the Middle East (CAP) and the pro-Israel silencing campaign on campuses**

Canadian Academics for Peace in the Middle East (CAP) is the new name for a group formerly called Canadian Academic Friends of Israel (CAFI). Despite the attempt to rebrand itself as neutral, its main activities have been to promote pro-Israel positions and justify Israeli policies. Ultimately it aims to undermine pro-Palestine activism through false charges of “anti-Semitism” and by silencing public critical debate about Israel on university campuses, especially during Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW).

### **What is CAP's link to pro-Israel activism on campus?**

Like its precursor (CAFI), this newer group is the academic arm of one of the primary pro-Israel lobby organizations, the Canadian Council for Israel and Jewish Advocacy (CIJA). CAP is one of the main organizations funded by CIJA, whose donations have been central in bringing CAP speakers to campuses. The strategy of this pro-Israel activism is clear. CAP solicits campus sponsors (e.g, departments) by offering speakers with all expenses paid. The false neutrality of “peace in the Middle East” is its vehicle and Israeli Apartheid Week is its target.

### **How is CAP involved in silencing discussions of Palestine on campus?**

CAP insists it welcomes dialogue, debate and discussion. Through its “Campus Dialogue Project” CAP claims to “embrace core values such as academic freedom, safety, mutual respect, civil discourse” and proclaims it “will adhere to principles of dialogue and respectful conversation”. **See link:** <http://academicsforpeace.ca/>

But, there is a stark contradiction between these stated values and the actions of CAP’s major funding organization and partner. CIJA has amply shown that it is against dialogue and academic freedom around events that examine Israel’s policies, practices and laws. CIJA is a major player in the campus silencing campaign, particularly in shutting down dialogue at events that analyze Israel as an apartheid state, expose its atrocious treatment of Palestinians since 1948, and examine its multiple and ongoing violations of international law.

Two recent examples demonstrate these attempts to suppress dialogue on Palestine:

- In 2009, CIJA applied extreme pressure on York University to withdraw its sponsorship from the conference "Israel/Palestine: Mapping Models of Statehood and Paths to Peace". This was a standard academic conference that received public funding through a rigorous peer-review process and which was one of York University’s 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary events. CIJA intervened in the processes of academic freedom by issuing a statement intended to influence York President Shoukri’s decisions. Among other things, this included a “recommendation” that “Events like this should not have the sanction of the university”.

**See link:** <http://www.fragilefreedomatyorcu.ca/academic-freedom/>



- In 2010, CIJA also played a key role in attempting to ban Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW). It released a statement commending those parties that supported an anti-IAW motion in Parliament, while also condemning the NDP for refusing to support the motion

### **Does CAP want real dialogue?**

From its origins as CAFI to its current form, CAP has maintained its pro-Israel affiliations, goals and funding. It has not cut ties with CIJA despite that organization's efforts to silence debate and discussion. In fact, CAP (and CIJA) do not define "dialogue" as open discussion and debate. Rather, these pro-Israeli calls for "dialogue" exclude all but the most narrow criticisms of Israel.

Most importantly, within the dialogue framework criticisms of Israel as an apartheid regime are considered out of bounds. Those making such criticisms and observations are accused of violating the values of "dialogue", of being disruptive and frequently charged with being "anti-Semitic". Such accusations are not accompanied by evidence or even logic. Rather, the logic of the dialogue framework permits conversation to be shut down by fiat and mere accusation, with the aim of ensuring that the content (i.e., criticism of Israel and facts about its ongoing, brutal colonial violence against Palestinians) will not be heard. This pro-Israeli call for "dialogue", then, is part of an overall strategy to silence and erase Palestinian history, voices, claims to the land, criticisms of Israel etc. On the politics of dialogue **see link:** <http://uppingtheanti.org/journal/article/09-shalom-salaam/>

### **Is criticism of Israel anti-Semitic?**

The idea of a "new anti-Semitism" has been promoted by pro-Israel groups as a way of silencing criticism of Israel. In short, it seeks to expand the accepted and important concept of anti-Semitism (i.e., anti-Jewish racism) to include criticism of Israel as an apartheid state. It also seeks to appropriate all Jews as supporters of Israel, and equate all Jews as onside with Israel, effectively delegitimizing the growing anti-Zionist Jewish movements who are in solidarity with Palestinians and who share the apartheid analysis. The "new anti-Semitism" charge has been re-mobilized in recent years, particularly through the International Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (ICCA) and its Canadian wing the CPCCA (Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism). For a good report on the CPCCA and "new anti-Semitism": <http://tinyurl.com/PFEXreport>

### **CAP, Israeli Apartheid Week, and the global BDS movement**

Organizations like CAP are created in response to the enormous global success of the Palestinian led Boycott, Divestment and Sanctions (BDS) movement. Initiated in 2005 and supported by over 170 Palestinian civil society organizations, BDS has sparked the most expansive global anti-apartheid movement since South Africa. Israeli Apartheid Week, which began at the University of Toronto, has been a crucial site of public education around Israeli apartheid and its consequences for Palestinians.



IAW promotes all three demands of the BDS movement: ending the occupation of Gaza and the West Bank; equal rights for Palestinians and all people living within Israel; and the Right of Return for all Palestinian refugees. To educate on these demands, IAW organizes a week of events including speakers, workshops, panels, performances and activism. Now in its 7<sup>th</sup> year, IAW has become an annual global event that takes place in over 60 cities.

See links: (IAW) <http://apartheidweek.org/> and (BDS) <http://www.bdsmovement.net/>

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This pamphlet has been produced by Faculty for Palestine (F4P), a committee of the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA). For more information about us go to [www.caiaweb.org/faculty](http://www.caiaweb.org/faculty)