

CEPPal

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Newsletter

March 2001

What is to be done?

The past five months of devastating human loss in Israel/Palestine has revealed the nakedness of the Oslo process. Like the emperor, the Oslo peace has no clothes.

Ceremonies, proclamations and endorsements can no longer conceal this truth. Seven years of Palestinian-Israeli negotiations, more often condescending instruction, has not built confidence and trust between the two communities destined to share historic Palestine. Instead, this empty, diversionary discourse has provided sufficient time for settlements to be expanded, bypass roads to be built and dependencies and deprivations to be exaggerated. The Oslo process is not about peace; it was never about peace.

This is an unsettling claim. It should not, however, be greeted with pessimism. Rather, it should be recognized as a window of hope. It represents an opportunity, one that must be seized by all those people who cherish human dignity, freedom and the future. Now is not the time for a return to the Oslo process and its interminable interm agreements. Now is the time to demand a true peace process for the people of Palestine. One premised on social justice and reconciled narratives. One premised on

outstanding UN resolutions and international law. Today, a resounding cry that insists on equality and true peace for Israel/Palestine must be raised.

How are we to add our voices to this chorus? First, we must stop placing our hopes and faith in the powerful and state authorities. We must rediscover the promise of the individual and her or his agency, her or his ability to make a difference. Second, this indomitable agency must be channeled into movements of civil society. Groups, organizations, societies must establish investigative committees, demand media accuracy and hold seminars and demonstrations. All these activities must have one aim: to humanize and moralize the Palestinian-Israeli relationship. Third, we must understand that settlements and intersections are not the only important sites of conflict. The battle of ideas, and for the Canadian consciousness, can be won with victories registered in Edmonton, Waterloo and Ottawa.

The voices we raise in unison will encourage and empower those suffering most egregiously. Ours will be the voices of courage and honesty. Ours must be the voices that demand equality and peace.

Welcome to CEPPal

Canadians for Equality and Peace for Palestinians (CEPPal) was formed in the wake of the outbreak of violence in Israel and the Occupied Territories of Palestine, also commonly referred to as the *Aqsa Intifada*, in September 2000. Our hope is to contribute, as members of the global community, to the progress towards a just solution to the 52 years of conflict and injustice in the region.

Our name was chosen to emphasize our belief that lasting peace cannot exist until all sides involved begin to see each other as human beings - as equals. A concept that may seem obvious, but has apparently eluded the region, at least on the political level. To this end, it is one of CEPPal's goals to humanize the crisis - through education, information and discussion, we begin to realize that the bodies we continue to see on TV were sons and daughters of humanity and not statistics.

We hope to provide a forum for those who want to get involved in Edmonton, and to network with other organizations working towards a just and sustainable future. We welcome you to CEPPal and hope to continue to see you again in the near future!



Canadians for Equality
and Peace for Palestinians

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UPCOMING EVENTS

Rally for the Right to Return

Saturday April 7, 2001

Be a part of the worldwide rally in support of the Palestinian refugees human right to return to the land they fled over 50 years ago.

The United Nations resolves that the refugees wishing to return to their homes and live at peace with their neighbours should be permitted to do so at the earliest practicable date.

- UN Resolution 193 on Palestine.

Stay Posted for more details on the Edmonton Rally on the CEPPal events website.

For more information on the international rallies please visit the *Palestine Right to Return Coalition*:

<http://www.al-awda.org/>

NETWORKING

Supporting other grass-roots organizations

HUMANSERVE International, Society for Relief and Development, is a non-profit agency based in Edmonton and registered with the Government of Alberta dedicated to providing educational, community health, development and social services in Lebanon and Palestine

Initially, the society was the western regional office of *Medical Aid for Palestine*, a non-government organization (NGO) based in Montreal. Between 1993 and 1996, several projects were implemented through the Edmonton office.

To facilitate administration, as of 1996 HUMANSERVE operates autonomously, but with close links to many other NGOs. The society is committed to results based, practical and sustainable development work.

Please visit them at: <http://www.humanserve.org>

Or phone: (780) 487-9373

VOLUNTEERS

If you are interested in getting more involved with CEPPal; continuously or for a specific upcoming event please contact us!

RECENT EVENTS

Voices From Palestine

Feb 16, 2001

University of Alberta

On the evening of February 16th, CEPPal hosted its first event since its formation. Dr. Atif Kubursi, a professor of Economics from McMaster University, delivered an insightful and passionate talk about the current plight of the Palestinian people. Using his expert knowledge in the field of economics, he spoke of the depleted state of the Palestinian economy which has suffered under Israeli restrictions; a topic rarely discussed. Dr. Kubursi urged the audience to appeal to the Canadian Government to remain faithful to its international reputation of being a guardian and supporter of tolerance and human rights for all.

The talk was followed by a Canadian-made documentary entitled *On the Borders of Gardens* by David Ridgen. The film offered Palestinian and Israeli points of view on the issue of the Palestinian refugees. The audience was given a rare glimpse into the lives of the forgotten millions of Palestinians who have arduously carved out a life in refugee camps for fifty years where countless people have been born and died.

Both the speech and the movie were successful in dispelling a number of myths surrounding the conflict and shedding light on the human condition and giving a voice to the Palestinians.

"We [must] stand apart from the idea we should be neutral and remain silent in the face of crimes against humanity." - Dr. James Orbinski, Doctor's without Borders

CEPPal is not affiliated with any groups mentioned in this newsletter, but supports either in whole or in part, their efforts to find a lasting peace for those in Israel and Palestine