

Israel, Racism and the Canadian Media

by Dan Freeman-Maloy (reprinted from Znet, 21 July 2006)

In the Canadian media, Israel is provoked, and then responds. For the military attacks on the Gaza Strip in late June and early July, 2006, we are told that the provocation was the June 25 operation by Palestinian resistance fighters against a military outpost near Gaza, and specifically the capture of an Israeli tank gunner.

The Palestinian operation, according to most Canadian media, was unprovoked – it could not have been provoked by the Israeli attacks leading up to the operation, though in June alone these had already killed 49 Palestinians. Nor could it have been provoked by the imprisonment of 359 Palestinian children, 105 Palestinian female adults and another 9000 plus Arab males (mostly Palestinians) in Israeli jails, or by the mass starvation of Gaza. As a June 30 editorial in *The Globe and Mail* put it, “the onus for resolving the confrontation lies with Hamas,” and while Palestinians must quietly endure tank shelling, air strikes and starvation, “Israel is within its right to respond to terrorism and violence.” Without pause, Israel has since gone on to invade Lebanon, killing hundreds of Lebanese, while Gaza continues to starve. In the Canadian media, Israel was provoked to do so, in this case by the capture of two Israeli soldiers by Hizbullah.

Hizbullah has not been provoked in the same way the Palestinians have been. So what prompted their action? An obvious possibility is that they were moved to action by the Israeli assault on Gaza. By the time Hizbullah carried out its July 12 attack, the Israeli escalation following June 25 had already claimed another 67 Palestinian lives. More direct grievances with Israel include the continued Israeli imprisonment of many Lebanese, particularly Hizbullah supporters, and the Israeli live ammunition training on the Lebanese border which recently

killed several Lebanese villagers. But one could barely begin to consider this on the basis of information provided by Canadian media. No attacks on Israel can have been provoked. All of Israel’s attacks must be provoked and defensive.

On July 13, Prime Minister Stephen Harper revealed the extent to which this logic has come to dominate Canadian diplomacy. With the Israeli military intensifying its assault on the Lebanese population and on critical civilian infrastructure, Harper described the massive attack as a “measured” exercise of Israel’s “right to defend itself.” Mainstream media joined in the chorus: “Faced with such aggression, Israel had no choice but to strike back,” a July 15 *Globe and Mail* editorial declared. The next day, several Canadians were added to the sky-rocketing death count from Israeli massacres.

Israel’s massacres in Gaza and southern Lebanon coincide with a shift in Canadian foreign policy. Under the past two regimes (Martin’s Liberals and now Harper’s Conservatives), Canada has rapidly shed any pretense of having an independent foreign policy and has aligned itself completely with the United States, Israel’s chief financial backer and arms dealer. Where past Canadian regimes would have settled for silent complicity in war crimes, Harper actively cheers and participates in them. This drastic realignment of Canadian policy happens at a time when the US and Israel are embarking on aggressive, criminal wars involving major human rights violations.

For Canadians to accept this, they will have to consume an equally drastic dose of racism, dehumanization, and distorted understanding. Getting them to do so may be somewhat of a challenge. The Canadian media have taken up the task with gusto.

AGGRESSION AND DEFENSE

“No nation would stand by while its enemies bombarded its towns and cities.”

The Globe and Mail Editorial, July 15, 2006

Of course, the *Globe's* editors were not talking about the Palestinian nation. The Palestinians are expected to stand by while Israel bombards its towns and cities, as it has been doing continuously for the past six years, with a sharp escalation in June – well before June 25, by which time of the month 49 Palestinians had already been killed. But when Palestinians resist through armed struggle, we read on *The Globe and Mail's* editorial pages that Israel's “right to respond to the latest Palestinian provocations is beyond question.” We cannot expect “superhuman effort” from Israel, the editors explain, and this is what would be required “to resist retaliating.”

Through most of June, the situation was quite different – but then it was only Palestinians who were being killed, only Palestinians who were starving. This was, in the words of the *Toronto Star's* Mitch Potter, a period of “relative calm.” For disturbing this calm, Palestinians bear a double responsibility: for aggression against Israel, and for forcing Israel to attack Palestinians in response. As Potter insists on repeating, the ongoing Israeli assault was itself “sparked initially by the June 25 capture of an Israeli soldier by Palestinian militants.”

In fact, if the notion of self-defense was applied with any consistency, the operation of June 25 would be beyond reproach. Following an economic siege and recurring air strikes on their communities, Palestinian fighters based in the Gaza Strip initiated an attack against the Israeli military. This is no small feat, since Gaza's airspace and borders are under tight Israeli control, and it is difficult for a lightly armed popular resistance to bring down F-16s. Nonetheless, the fighters managed to tunnel their way underground for hundreds of metres, deep beneath Israeli fortifications, to reach a military outpost for their raid. Two Israeli soldiers were killed in the fighting, as were two Palestinians, creating a very rare symmetry in the death count. Palestinian fighters also destroyed an Israeli tank, likely one of those that regularly shell Palestinian communities from such outposts. They captured the tank gunner and brought him back to Gaza as

a prisoner of war.

The Palestinian resistance thus had one Israeli detainee, as against some 10,000 prisoners on the Israeli side. The resistance group offered a limited exchange. They would release the tank gunner if Israel freed Palestinian child prisoners, female prisoners, and approximately 1,000 “administrative detainees” currently in Israeli prisons without charge. A negotiated settlement reached through conditions of reciprocity and dignity could well have seen the soldier released. But Israel had a different plan.

As former Israeli intelligence director Shlomo Gazit explained, the situation served as a “pretext” for escalating military operations in Gaza. Israeli forces began a series of forceful incursions, destroying critical civilian infrastructure through air strikes, shelling Palestinian communities, and instituting a comprehensive siege on the territory. These escalations quickly revealed the Israeli goal as regime change. The Israeli military rounded up and detained 64 political leaders from the occupied West Bank and Gaza, including elected legislators and a third of the Palestinian Cabinet. It began aerial bombardment of central civilian structures housing the Palestinian Authority.

The Israeli regime responsible for these attacks enjoys thorough support from the Canadian government. Its Prime Minister, Ehud Olmert, visited Canada little more than a year ago. During the visit, he received a pledge from the federal government that it would maintain preferential trade policies towards Israel. Olmert also visited Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty at Queen's Park, where he helped to set up a parallel provincial trade arrangement. Joking with reporters as he presented McGuinty with a gift, Olmert asked: “Do you want us to hug?” (www.cjnews.com/viewarticle.asp?id=6122&cs=1) Olmert and Canadian officials did everything but.

The Harper government strengthened links with Israel further, making Canada still more complicit in ongoing Israeli crimes. As Israeli attacks ravaged Gaza, journalists with concern for “balance” ought to have paid attention to who was doing the killing and who the victims were.

Instead, Canadian media continued shifting focus to Palestinian culpability and encouraging the government's pro-Israel partisanship. The spin in news coverage was spelled out explicitly on editorial

pages. The *Toronto Star's* editors called attention to “the folly of what [Palestinians] wrought by electing a Hamas government,” while staking limited optimism on “the hope of a chastened Palestinian Authority.” (June 29) The editors of the *National Post* and *The Globe and Mail* held Palestinians directly responsible for Israeli attacks. “That there is a humanitarian tragedy afflicting the Palestinian people there can be no doubt,” a July 29 *National Post* editorial conceded, “but in the current context, it is a tragedy entirely of their own making.” On June 30, *The Globe's* editors hammered away at the same theme: “The main responsibility for the death and destruction that has followed [June 25] lies with Palestinian militants and leaders.”

The capture of a tank gunner as a prisoner of war was translated into an act of aggression, a “kidnapping.” Within a couple of weeks, the three leading Anglo Canadian dailies – *The Globe and Mail*, the *Toronto Star* and the *National Post* – had published the name of the captured (“kidnapped”) soldier more than 100 times, often alongside his age and other personal information. The *Globe's* Shira Herzog, reflecting a broad journalistic consensus, explained that strong Israeli retaliation was necessary: Israel “is a country that takes collective pride in the sanctity of every life, an ethos that comforts Israeli soldiers in combat who know that no human effort will be spared to rescue even a single one of them from enemy territory, dead or alive.”

As for the apparent contradiction given Israel's approach to the lives of Palestinian prisoners, the issue could not be ignored entirely. On the thorny issue of child prisoners, the *Globe* referred readers to a front-page article on the topic it had published on June 19, titled “Getting locked up to get away from it all.” The piece argued that Palestinian children view imprisonment in Israeli jails as “a dream vacation” and are getting themselves imprisoned willfully as part of a Palestinian cultural trend. Regarding female prisoners, the paper published a June 27 report titled “Palestinian female prisoners have ‘blood on their hands’.” The title was based on a quote from the Israeli prison authority, and the article assured readers that those Palestinian women convicted in Israeli military courts were quite guilty and very bad. The *Post*, for its part, ran an editorial referring without distinction to all the Palestinians

whom the resistance was demanding be released – children, women and “administrative detainees” alike – as “fanatics now justifiably languishing in Israeli prisons.”

Canadian media thus followed the Israeli lead, prizing the sanctity of every Israeli life while holding Palestinian lives in utter contempt.

DEHUMANIZING PALESTINIANS

“It is our duty to prevent any danger of losing a Jewish majority or creating an inseparable bi-national reality in the Land of Israel.”

Israeli Prime Minister Ehud Olmert,
June 20, 2006 (Speech to the
35th Zionist Congress in Jerusalem)

As disturbing as it is, contempt for Palestinian life on the part of Israel and its supporters is unsurprising. It is, in fact, a necessary cornerstone of the ideology of political Zionism, which guides the Israeli political establishment and determines the core of Israeli policy.

This policy is based on the determination to establish and maintain a state with a Jewish majority on lands that have long been home to a predominantly non-Jewish native population. Pursuit of this goal has involved expelling Palestinians from these lands, prohibiting their right to return to their homes, and encouraging large-scale Zionist settlement from abroad. This is a recipe for perpetual crisis and violence. Israeli forces effectively control all of historic (mandatory) Palestine, the territory stretching from the Jordan River to the Mediterranean Sea. And despite Israel's forced exile of millions of Palestinians from these lands, the present inhabitants of this territory are in the majority not Jewish.

For Canadians to support Israel, they must adopt the Israeli perspective regarding the native population of this land, the view that the Palestinian population is an ethnic imbalance to be corrected, a problem to be dealt with, a “demographic threat” to a state which must be made “Jewish” at all costs. This thoroughly racist position frames mainstream Canadian debate.

It is hardly worth quoting the *National Post* on this, given that the paper is operated by CanWest Global, a media conglomerate founded by two of Canada's leading Israel lobbyists (Israel Asper and

Gerry Schwartz). But the position holds firm on the liberal wing of the Canadian mainstream.

Consider, for example, the work of Mitch Potter, the *Toronto Star's* leading Israel-Palestine pundit in recent weeks. Potter is aware that Gaza is not the planet's most densely-populated area by accident, but largely as a result of the mass expulsion of Palestinians from the 78 percent of historic Palestine occupied by Zionist forces in 1948 (when Zionists took their first real stab at achieving a Jewish majority). Some 700,000 Palestinians were then expelled from the territory claimed as the State of Israel, forced into either neighboring countries or the 22 percent of Palestine still outside of Zionist control (the West Bank and Gaza Strip). With respect to the Israeli settlement of Ashkelon, for example, Potter offers the following background: "The modern city was formed by Jewish immigrants to Israel in the site of the Arab town of Al-Majdal, whose 11,000 residents were mostly driven into Gaza after the 1948 war."

Potter does not even feel it necessary to explain why those driven out cannot return to their homes in accord with the basic, inalienable rights of refugees displaced during wartime. Instead, Potter automatically assumes the Israeli perspective. He correctly explains that the Israeli "disengagement" from Gaza was simply an outgrowth of Israel's agenda of ethnic and national discrimination. For obvious reasons, Israel has been finding it difficult to deny the indigenous presence on the land it has conquered. This difficulty, Potter explained, was addressed through an effort to permanently exclude the Palestinian refugees of Gaza from dominant settler society: "Analysts spoke of an emerging Israeli consensus that understood a bitter pill had to be swallowed once and for all in order for Israel to cure itself of the demographic realities of the burgeoning Palestinian birth rate."

This is unabashed racism: the native majority population is described as a disease to be treated by state policy, though even conceding Palestinians a stretch of land to starve on is a "bitter pill." None of the leading Canadian newspapers published a serious challenge to this racism.

Instead, they repeatedly published the flimsy argument that such a challenge would itself be racist. In a rhetorical sleight of hand that has become quite familiar, commentators repeatedly suggested

that basic principles of human and national rights must be sacrificed on the altar of political Zionism, and that defending the rights of Palestinians (particularly those in exile) amounts to anti-Jewish racism. The point was put clearly in a July 3 column in *The Globe and Mail*: "it's anti-Semitic to call, as CUPE did (see *The Bullet* #22), for an unconditional right of return of all Palestinian refugees, since such a massive demographic change would mean the destruction of Israel as a Jewish state."

The *Globe* thus tells us that Palestine's indigenous population is not only inferior and troublesome, but also oppressively racist by its very presence.

From this perspective, contempt for Palestinian life comes all too naturally. On June 29, the *National Post*, ever a mouthpiece for Israeli diplomacy, addressed the issue through an interview with Israeli foreign and deputy prime minister Tzipi Livni. For Livni, as reporter Douglas Davis uncritically relayed to readers, international contempt for Palestinian life is still insufficient: "She is particularly irritated by the equivalence given to the deaths of Palestinian and Israeli children ... 'Only when the world sends the right message to the terrorists will they understand that it's not the same.'" Canada's leading journalists have already gotten the message.

Consider, again, the work of Mitch Potter, who in his recent position as the *Toronto Star's* leading Israel-Palestine pundit is a canary in the mineshaft of liberal Canadian racism. On June 30, just one day after the publication of Livni's anti-"equivalency" plea, Potter made the following assertion: "Despite five days of international headlines there has been but a single death – that of kidnapped 18-year-old Israeli hitchhiker Eliyahu Asheri."

Apparently, it was not worth counting the two Palestinian children, aged 2 and 17, who were killed on June 28 by an unexploded Israeli shell in the Gaza community of Khan Yunis (though this had even been reported in the *New York Times*). Nor was it worth retracting or correcting Potter's statement in light of the Israeli military's killing of a Palestinian in nearby Rafah at 2 a.m. on the morning of the 30th, or of another in the West Bank city of Nablus a little more than 3 hours later (already by 6:13am, *Agence France Press* had reported the Nablus killing). There were reports of other deaths during this period, which Potter or his editors could easily have

investigated if they took Palestinian life seriously.

Evidently, they do not. As the Palestinian death toll mounted in the following week, denying the fatalities outright became untenable. Instead, Potter reduced Palestinian resistance to stubborn stupidity and described the fallen fighters as animals: “Another batch of Palestinian militants drawn out lemming-like and falling by the dozen to higher-calibre Israeli fire, just like their predecessors.” [For Potter to call Palestinians lemmings is certainly ironic]. Falling, he might have added, to US weapons, with the support of Canadian foreign policy and its loyal pundits.

WHITEWASHING COLLECTIVE PUNISHMENT

“Hezbollah and Hamas ... triggered the current crisis by staging guerrilla raids into Israel”

Toronto Star, July 19
(reporter Less Whittington)

On July 12, Hizbullah, for decades the main southern Lebanese group in resistance to Israel, captured two Israeli soldiers and killed two more on the Israel-Lebanon border. That day, Israel not only killed 23 Palestinian civilians in Gaza, but also began to bomb Beirut. Israeli military action against Lebanon swiftly escalated. On July 15, for example, Reuters reported that Israel used loudspeakers to order Lebanese civilians to leave the village of Marwaheen. 20 people, including 15 children, got in a van to leave. Israel then bombed the van, killing them all.

Of all of Israel’s international allies, including the United States, the Harper government was widely regarded as the most outspoken diplomatic supporter of escalating Israeli attacks. For Canadian media, fully accustomed to whitewashing Israeli atrocities, this was only appropriate. Massacres and the war crime of collective punishment were sanitized and reduced to offhand euphemisms: “As in the Palestinian territories,” the *Globe’s* Orly Halpern reported, “Israel is ratcheting up the pressure on the civilian population in an effort to push the Lebanese to reject Hezbollah tactics.” (July 14)

And as in Palestinian territory, the attacks were a matter of defense. On July 15, the *Globe* editorialized: “The kidnapping of the two Israeli soldiers, in a small country that holds the life of every soldier dear, was a grievous provocation. Coming just

weeks after the seizing of another soldier by militants at the other end of the country, it looks like a coordinated campaign of intimidation.”

The imputed “coordinated campaign of intimidation,” which *Globe* editors disapprove of, is not to be confused with Israel’s “ratcheting up the pressure on the civilian population,” with which the *Globe* raises only strategic objections.

As Israel continued to kill and starve Palestinians, and as the Lebanese death toll from Israeli massacres mounted into the hundreds (with several Canadians killed in the indiscriminate bombardment), Mitch Potter explained that Palestinians now shared blame for the violence – with Hizbullah: “The words Hamas and Hezbollah may sound equally foreboding to most Western ears. And the militant merger of the two has brought the Middle East to the brink of regional war.” (July 16)

Even for the killing of Canadians, Israeli culpability was sidelined: “Lebanon terror hits home,” read a *Toronto Star* headline on the topic for July 17; “Canadians were killed in crossfire of fight with Hezbollah,” read another headline, this one from the July 18 issue of *The Globe and Mail*. In much of the coverage, it was as if Canadians were fleeing a natural disaster, not a campaign of collective punishment fully condoned by the Harper government.

The reliance on Israeli sources became almost comical. By July 19, the Lebanese death count from Israeli massacres had reached 312, with more than 100,000 civilians displaced. As Canadians scrambled to leave Lebanon amidst the Israeli assault, the public relations line of the chief Israeli diplomatic to Canada received the widest possible circulation through a story printed by the *Canadian Press*. Drawing entirely from unsubstantiated claims, the piece ran with the headline “Canadians fleeing Lebanon could be Hezbollah targets: Israeli ambassador.”

Israel has since pledged to continue its invasion of Lebanon for weeks to come, and both the Canadian government and Canadian media are lining up in support. The *Toronto Star’s* Mitch Potter continues to get front-page attention for his articles, led by prominent cover references to Lebanese “terror” (July 18) and the suggestion that Hizbullah leader Sheik Hassan Nasrallah could be the “next Osama bin Laden” (July 19). Potter’s journalism is shallow public relations, most recently for Israeli assassina-

tion efforts against Nasrallah. Potter has described the leader as an eloquent, strategic figure with a mass base for regional resistance to Israel. From his vantage point in “the corridors of power” in Israel, Potter notes that “the strategies for Israeli victory are converging on Nasrallah’s head.”

Israel, while pledging a prolonged attack on Lebanon, has continued its atrocities in Gaza and escalated attacks on the West Bank, with incursions into the Palestinian towns of Nablus (where the Israeli military took over the municipality building, smashed cars and shot indiscriminately at residents’ houses), Tulkarem, Bethlehem and Jenin.

The Harper government’s nearly unconditional support for this Israeli aggression is scandalous, matched only by the media’s support for Harper. On July 20, *The Globe and Mail’s* editors reaffirmed this. The title of the editorial in “Canada’s national newspaper,” which praised Harper for his “refreshing” pro-Israel diplomacy, conveys the general tone of coverage: “Harper is right on the Mideast.”

MOUNTING A CHALLENGE

There are indications that the Canadian population may be lagging behind the political establishment in its contempt for Palestinians. At the end of 2004, the Canada-Israel Committee (CIC) released polls which offer some hope in this regard. They found that prior to the recent intensification of support for Israel, official Canadian pro-Israel partisanship was opposed by majority public opinion. The polls found that the more Canadians learn about the Israel-Palestine conflict, the more they sympathize with the Palestinian cause.

In recent months, this sympathy has found increasingly organized expression. The July, 2006 massive demonstrations in Montreal come on the heels of various important displays of regional solidarity with the Palestinian struggle. Prominent among these is the decision by the Ontario wing of the Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE-Ontario), Canada’s largest union of public sector workers, to identify Israel’s regime of systematic ethnic and national discrimination as apartheid, and to join the call for boycott, divestment and sanctions against Israel until apartheid is dismantled. This movement is continuing to spread, and is picking up momentum within the United Church and elsewhere.

As the Canadian government opts instead for open rejection of the rights of Palestinians (and Lebanese), “Israel advocacy” groups like the Canada-Israel Committee take comfort in support from the mainstream press. When the Harper government became the first of Israel’s allies to support renewed suffocation of the Palestinian economy (in March 2006), CIC communications director Paul Michaels commented happily that the “decision was greeted positively on the editorial pages of most Canadian newspapers.” Again in late June, Canadian media indifference to attacks on Palestinians occasioned the expression of satisfaction on the part of the CIC: “While events on the ground included several Israeli air strikes in which civilians were injured or killed, this week’s media coverage was fairly light.”

With support from the government and the corporate press, Israel’s allies pretend to near universal Canadian representation. They are in turn able to depict Palestine solidarity as a rejection of the popular consensus: “This week,” a *Globe* article on July 8 declared, “public opinion was inflamed again when, contrary to the outrage [against CUPE for its Palestine work], the Toronto Conference of the United Church of Canada commended CUPE Ontario for its stand, and echoed the union’s call for a boycott of Israeli goods.”

There is no denying the real strength of Canada’s institutional base of support for Israel. However, there is good reason to believe that this does not flow from “popular opinion.” Rather, it results from the eagerness of the Canadian government to harmonize its foreign policy with the US, the support of corporate Canada for this agenda, and the strength of Canadian “Israel advocacy” groups which draw support from corporate organization, the United States and Israel itself. Mainstream media are reflecting and shaping the pro-Israel consensus determined by these powerful interests. But they have yet to bring a real public consensus behind them.

In this context, opportunities for a successful challenge to Canadian support for Israel remain very real. But it is only outside of the political establishment that this challenge can be built, and only through alternative information systems that it can be sustained. In any event, it is clear that while genuine awareness of the Israel-Palestine conflict may

translate into Palestine solidarity, the mainstream press, far from the solution, is quite near to the core of the problem.

ADDENDUM (MAY 2008)

This article was originally published by ZNet on July 21, 2006. Since then, Canadian officials and mainstream media alike have not lost the opportunity of intensifying Israeli assaults in Gaza to express continued contempt for Palestinians and their basic rights.

2008 opened with the siege on Gaza reaching increasingly genocidal proportions, the outcome of a policy of “economic warfare” (read: collective punishment) which was upheld by the Israeli Supreme Court. The extraordinary act of popular mobilization which saw Palestinians force open the Rafah crossing on January 23 found Canadian officials and most commentators as complicit as ever. On January 22, the *Globe and Mail* ran yet another editorial holding Palestinians responsible for the crimes committed against them, under the blunt title “Blame it on Hamas.” On January 24, the United Nations Human Rights Council (HRC) voted to demand that Israel lift the blockade on Gaza. The resolution passed with 30 votes in favour, 15 abstentions, and Canada alone opposing it.

In persistent support of the Harper government’s deteriorating diplomacy, Canadian media have continued to line up behind Israel. The threat made against Palestinians on February 28 by Israeli deputy defense minister Matan Vilnai – that “they will bring upon themselves a bigger Shoah” – provoked no real criticism here, even though the Hebrew term “Shoah” refers almost exclusively to the Nazi genocide. CanWest media outlets (drawing from Reuters) referred to “the strength of the language” used by Vilnai, while other media chose to ignore the issue entirely. Over the next week, Israeli military operations killed 120 Palestinians in Gaza (34 of them children), and wounded 269. And at the March 6 meeting of the HRC, with little criticism at home, Canada was once again the only member state to vote against a resolution criticizing Israeli atrocities.

While it is precisely the breadth of the dominant

Canadian consensus on this issue that is so disturbing, the recent conduct of the CanWest media empire requires special attention. This year, CanWest has been celebrating its renewed expansion, including the initiation of a national news service run from Ottawa. Meanwhile, it has continued to consolidate its hold in Western Canada, particularly in Vancouver, a city which has been described as “Canada’s media concentration capital.” From this base, CanWest has recently launched a startling political attack on long-time respected community activist, particularly with respect to Palestinian solidarity, Mordecai Briemberg.

Briemberg is presently facing a major lawsuit from CanWest. Formally, this relates to a parody of the local CanWest paper, the *Vancouver Sun*, which was circulated in satirical criticism of the paper’s skewed coverage of Israel/Palestine. The satirical publication included headlines such as “Celebrating 40 Years of Civilizing the West Bank” and “Study Shows Truth Biased Against Israel.” Encountering the publication at a local event, Briemberg was amused, picked up a few copies, and reportedly handed a few out. CanWest has now singled him out for retaliation through the courts.

As the Seriously Free Speech Committee, organized in Briemberg’s defence, explains: “While ostensibly centering on a commercial violation of trade mark, the charges read like a political attack.” Including broad references to Briemberg’s alleged “anti-Israeli and pro-Palestinian media activities,” CanWest submissions “demand a sweeping variety of remedies including an injunction restraining the defendants from ‘publishing injurious falsehoods by way of newspapers or other publications, on the internet or otherwise.’”

This attack is symptomatic of an effort to prevent free and critical discussion of Israel/Palestine, and to maintain Canadian official and media practices which are both unpopular and unjust. Further details on this case are available at www.seriously-freespeech.ca.

CanWest media outlets do enough political damage by the direct force of their skewed coverage. The additional effort to silence independent voices cannot be taken lightly. ❖