

Deep cyber cafe



**ASSIGN
BUSTER**

All across Canada and in the United States, there is an organized campaign to suppress criticism of Israeli policies toward the Palestinians. The campaign is especially strong on university campuses where many voices have been raised in support of human rights for the Palestinians. One such example is the attempt to suppress the Public Interest Research Group, founded by Ralph Nader, at the University of Ottawa for their support for Palestinian human rights.

Similar anti-Palestinian campaigns have occurred at many universities in Canada including the University of Toronto, the University of Western Ontario and York University. An attack against a student group that was sympathetic to the Palestinians occurred at the University of Western Ontario in 1982. The student group was refused official recognition because of its support for the Palestinians and for sponsoring Palestinian and Arab speakers. After this refusal a complaint was made to the Ontario Human Rights Commission.

After a long battle, and with the support of the Canadian Civil Liberties Association and its General Counsel Alan Borovoy, and a supportive editorial in *The Globe & Mail*, the Ontario Human Rights Commission compelled the University Students Council at the University of Western Ontario to issue a statement of regret and to ratify the student group. The refusal was deemed discriminatory against Palestinians and persons associated with Palestinians. Despite this successful legal precedent at Western Ontario there have been many attacks against individuals and groups across Canada and the United States because of their support for human rights for Palestinians. Over the last few years there is a concerted attempt to suppress discussion of the Palestinian issue in North America. There also is a campaign to punish those

individuals who have spoken out in support of the Palestinians by cutting funding and by denying them tenure and even getting them terminated from their positions of employment.

Two well-known examples of firings are the campaigns that targeted Jewish professors' Norman Finkelstein (author of many books on Israel and Zionism including *Image and Reality of the Israel-Palestinian Conflict* (Verso Press, New York, 1995) and Joel Kovel (author of *Overcoming Zionism: Creating a Single Democratic State in Israel/Palestine* (Pluto Press: London, 2007)) for their attacks on Israel's policies toward the Palestinians. Another tactic is to smear such individuals who have supported the Palestinians with allegations of anti-Semitism.

One such individual was Arch Bishop Desmond Tutu. A few complaints from the Jewish community led to the Noble Prize winner being banned from speaking on campus by the University of St. Thomas in Minnesota. Tutu was attacked because of statements he made criticizing Israeli policy toward the Palestinians that some Jewish individuals said were "anti Semitic." Marv Davidov, an adjunct professor with the Justice and Peace Studies program at the University of St.

Thomas said: As a Jew who experienced real anti-Semitism as a child, I'm deeply disturbed that a man like Tutu could be labeled anti-Semitic and silenced like this,... I deeply resent the Israeli lobby trying to silence any criticism of its policy. It does a great disservice to Israel and to all Jews. After provoking a strong backlash against the decision, and a campaign lead by

Jewish Voice for Peace in support of the Arch Bishop which produced more than 6, 000 letters of protest, the University rescinded the ban.

Professor Bill Robinson was also a target of a similar campaign about alleged anti-Semitism to get him fired at the University of California Santa Barbara (UCSB). Ultimately the University administration defended Robinson's academic freedom and the right to express his opinions in his global politics class. Robinson, who is Jewish, distributed an email prepared by a pro-Palestinian Jewish activist that compared the Israeli attack on Gaza to the Nazi attack on the Warsaw Ghetto.

In response to this attack on Professor Robinson, more than 100 UCSB faculty members signed a petition asking the university to dismiss the charges against him. In addition, 16 university department chairs wrote letters to the University authorities asking them to dismiss the case against Robinson. Sir Gerald Kaufman, one of the founders of Independent Jewish Voices in Britain, also used his position as a Member of Parliament in London, England to criticize Israeli policy toward the Palestinians. Members of Kaufman's family perished at the hands of the Nazis and in the Holocaust.

As one of the U. K. 's harshest critics of Israeli policies, Kaufman routinely compared the Jewish state's treatment of Palestinians to Nazi Germany's treatment of Jews. ² This campaign to silence critics of Israel and to demonize supporters of the Palestinians is most disturbing and a violation of free speech, academic freedom and violation of Palestinian human rights. It is also a violation of basic democratic rights when a government does it. For

example, the recent cuts to the Canadian Arab Federation's funding by Citizenship and Immigration Minister Jason Kenney.

The punitive action taken by Minister Kenney is a denial of the fundamental freedoms and rights which are guaranteed in the Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms. The Charter guarantees the right of free speech and freedom of conscience and protects the individual and organizations from government sanction. This campaign is also an attack on the numerous dissenting Jews who support human rights for the Palestinians. Canadian Jewish groups like Not in Our Name (NION) and Jewish Independent Voices (Canada) and their support for the Palestinians and their criticism of the “ Jewish State” are simply ignored.

For political purposes, they simply do not exist. The mainstream media also rarely covers these alternative Jewish perspectives. However, there are rare exceptions and sometimes views critical of Zionism are published in the mainstream North American press. Here is one notable example: “ It's hard to imagine now, but in 1944, six years after Kristallnacht, Lessing J. Rosenwald, president of the American Council for Judaism, felt comfortable equating the Zionist ideal of Jewish statehood with “ the concept of a racial state — the Hitlerian concept. For most of the last century, a principled opposition to Zionism was a mainstream stance within American Judaism.