

http://cpavancouver.org/letter_SarahEfron_PeaceItTogether.pdf

The following letter was sent to Sarah Efron, a freelance journalist, regarding reporting about the "Peace It Together" camp held this summer in Vancouver. The camp brought Israeli and Palestinian teenagers to Vancouver from the Middle East and received a lot of attention in the local media as a step towards reconciliation in the region. It was also well received by local Zionists. Our letter explains why most of the local Palestinian community had reservations about this camp and similar initiatives.

30/09/2004

Dear Sarah:

Thank you for the report you did for CBC Radio about the Israeli/Palestinian Peace Camp (<http://www.sarahefron.com/stories/peacecamp.shtml>). In your print edition, you quote me as saying that "As long as there is no equality (my emphasis), dialogue is nice but doesn't lead anywhere..."

In a large part of your interview with me, I talked about the preconditions for any dialogue which included the importance of equality among peoples in Israel/Palestine if there is any hope for a peaceful solution. By putting the sentence "As long as there is no equality" you captured the essence of my reasoning as to why I have doubts about "Peace it Together". Unfortunately my opinion was not reflected in the CBC Radio on air report (The Early Edition *CBC Radio*, August 25, 2004 [Listen to the Story](#))

I was disappointed that you did not inform me that you are going to use the same interview for an article in the Zionist paper The Jewish Western Bulletin (JWB) (<http://www.jewishindependent.ca/archives/Sept04/archives04Sept17-02.html>). This article also does not include any reference to equality as a precondition to dialogue. The JWB supports Israeli war crime against the Palestinian people and is complicit in these war crimes (please see our positions which were reported by JWB: (<http://www.jewishindependent.ca/archives/Aug03/archives03Aug01-01.html>) and (<http://www.jewishindependent.ca/archives/Nov02/archives02Nov29-22.html>))

I would like to re-state, for the record, the preconditions for any successful dialogue amongst Palestinians and Israelis, which might lead to fruitful results and help the process of forgiveness, healing and coexistence. In addition to agreeing to the obvious, that the 37 year old Israeli occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip and Jerusalem should be terminated completely and unconditionally, the following are essential for any future dialogue.

1. Recognizing the injustice that befell the Palestinian people in 1947/48 where over 400 Palestinian villages and towns were wiped off the map of the world and where over 75 percent of the Palestinian people became refugees. Without recognizing "the original sin against the native Arabs", as the Israeli author Benjamin Beit-Hallahmi put it in his book *Original Sins*:

Reflections on the History of Zionism and Israel, THERE CAN BE NO DIALOGUE.

2. As long as there is no agreement on a coordinated and vocal opposition to the racist laws, where discrimination between Jew and non Jew is institutionalized in Israeli society, there is no basis for any fruitful dialogue. An example of this is the Israeli law of return which applies to any Jew (Israeli or not) while the same law does NOT apply to Palestinians with Israeli citizenship because they are Muslims or Christians (they are not from the "chosen people"). Without recognizing the racist dimension of such laws and having the commitment of all to reverse them, THERE CAN BE NO DIALOGUE.
3. As long as 93 per cent of the land in Israel is controlled by the Jewish National Fund (JNF) and as the Israeli scholar Uri Davis said, "is reserved under law for Jewish citizens only. If the apartheid distinction in South Africa was between white and non-white, the apartheid distinction in Israel is between Jew and non-Jew". Without recognizing the injustice of these Israeli apartheid land policies THERE CAN BE NO DIALOGUE.
4. Israeli-born Adam Keller from Gush Shalom in his recent trip to Canada stated "The demand of Palestinian refugees to come back to where they lived in Israel before 1948 is a morally justified demand. (One would think) the first to sympathize with this would be a Zionist. " The Palestinian Right of Return should be recognized, and most objection to it is based solely on supremacist ideology that does not recognize the humanity of Palestinian Christians and Moslems. Without this recognition of this sacred collective and individual "Right of Return", THERE CAN BE NO DIALOGUE.

Finally, any dialogue held without recognizing these basic conditions, no matter how well-intentioned, is just a sham and serves the PR interests of the more powerful side in the conflict (i.e. Israel). This inescapable outcome explains the reservations most Palestinians have towards projects like the "peace camp". True dialogue can be easily conducted if there is recognition on both sides that we are all human beings with equal rights and obligations. If one side believes that they are a superior race and they are doing it as a charity act or as an insurance policy or as a tactic till objective conditions change, then THERE CAN BE NO DIALOGUE, NO JUSTICE AND CERTAINLY NO HEALING, NO RECONCILIATION AND NO PEACE.

Yours truly
Hanna Kawas

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