

November 2002, by [Hanna Kawas](#)

### Why ignore the war on Palestine?

Why did the Vancouver Nov. 17, 2002 Coalition not want to link the war on the Palestinians with the war on Iraq in all of its publicity (amazingly, some of the publicity did not even mention Iraq)?

This decision to ignore the war on Palestine in its publicity was taken at an organizing committee meeting in October, and passed by a majority vote. Our staunch opposition to this position arises not from a narrow sectarian concern, but rather from a long-standing commitment to the aspirations of all the Arab people and the interests of the Canadian people. The record of Canada Palestine Association (CPA) stands for itself. Not only is support for the Iraqi people an integral part of what we do, we were also the first (and only) group in this city to demonstrate against Israel's destruction of Iraq's Osirak reactor in 1981, and the first group to demonstrate against the impending U.S. war on Iraq in the fall of 1990.

Lets look at the situation today.

The US government has declared that its objectives for the attack on Iraq are:

- To force Iraq to abide by UN Security Council resolutions,
- To get rid of "weapons of mass destruction" in Iraq, and
- To have a regime change in Baghdad.

It is also well known that:

Israel, since its creation in 1948, is the country with the worst record of violating UN resolutions, the UN Charter and the Fourth Geneva Convention.

Israel is the only country in the whole Middle East that possesses 400 nuclear warheads with the largest stockpile of chemical and biological weapons and the capability of delivering them.

Israel is also working for regime changes in Baghdad and Palestine, and for that matter with any regime that challenges US and Israeli hegemony in the Middle East.

So why deny the anti-war movement the main arguments that expose US hypocrisy and double standards and demonstrate the TRUE cause of why the US is carrying on this war against Iraq, Palestine and the whole Arab nation: the control of the region and its natural resources, as part and parcel of the US drive for world hegemony? Why not expose Israel for what it really is: an advanced military base with the most sophisticated and deadly US weapons that serve Western interests in the region? Why push to marginalize the Palestinian struggle?

"Israel is the American watchdog in the Middle East, and that's why the Palestinians remain victims of one of the longest military occupations... Israel is the representative of the United States in that part of the world." John Pilger, The Progressive, November 2002

We are sure that the Nov. 17 coalition didn't serve the Canadian public by denying and hiding the facts, and we are more than sure that the coalition did not serve the interests of the Arab people nor the Palestinian people. Palestine and Iraq are linked whether they recognized this fact or not, and whether they ignored it or not. When and if the US launches its attack on Iraq, the events that will unfold in the Arab world will make this insistence on separation between Iraq and Palestine look not only

shortsighted, but also insensitive to the aspirations of people in the Middle East.

Here are a few facts to consider:

- Israel is the architect of the 1990's US policy of so-called "dual containment" against Iraq and Iran.
- George Bush's Zionist speechwriter David Frum was the architect of the "Axis of Evil" phrase.
- Ariel Sharon stated, "'Iraq is a great danger. It could be said it is the greatest danger'...but he added that 'strategic coordination between Israel and the U.S. has reached unprecedented dimensions'." (Haaretz, August 13, 2002) And on November 4, 2002, Sharon told George Bush in front of reporters. "We never had such a cooperation in everything as we have had with the current administration." Washington Post 11/04/2002
- "Israel is secretly playing a key role in U.S. preparations for possible war with Iraq, helping to train soldiers and Marines for urban warfare, conducting clandestine surveillance missions in the western Iraqi desert and allowing the United States to place combat supplies in Israel, according to U.S. Defense and intelligence officials." USA TODAY, 11/03/2002

The US opposed any linkage between Iraq and Palestine in 1991 and now again in 2002. Was this new coalition supporting this US objective as did their predecessors in "End the Arms Race" in 1991?? We recognize the tactical value of broad-based coalitions; however, such coalitions become meaningless without clearly defined minimum principles. Although there are new and encouraging trends emerging, the Canadian labour, left and peace movements have regrettably in the past demonstrated a consistent and entrenched pattern of denying the legitimate rights of the Palestinian and other suffering peoples at crucial junctures. This needs to be examined in more depth than can be attempted in this statement but here are just a few examples.

The "End the Arms Race" demonstrations of the 1980s, led in succession by then mayors of Vancouver, first the Zionist Mike Harcourt, and then later by none other than Gordon Campbell, were billed as massive popular achievements at the time.

What did these demonstrations really achieve (certainly not the education of Gordon Campbell), aside from heralding the downfall of one of the few deterrent forces - the USSR- against US hegemony? And why, following that downfall, were they not followed up by the same massive demonstrations against the new sole mega-superpower, the US?

The traditional "anti-war" movement during the Gulf War in 1991 supported the sanctions on Iraq, which makes it complicit with all the atrocities committed against the Iraqi people since then. Another shameful aspect of that movement was the racist attitude it practiced against Arab Canadians here, with its attempts to marginalize them from the 1991 anti-war events.

Last year's attempt by grassroots individuals and organizations to form Mobilization Against War and Racism (MAWAR) was aborted by the same "anti-war" forces who transformed the agenda, created contradictions and succeeded in marginalizing the pro-Palestinian support movement. Unfortunately, MAWAR was eventually destroyed.

For all the above reasons, CPA urges all progressive, anti-imperialist and genuine anti-war activists and trade unionists to take a stand and to not allow the same old defeatist and revisionist forces to hijack the progressive anti-war agenda.

In an interview with Newsweek on Sep. 10, 2002, Nelson Mandela stated: "But what we know is that Israel has weapons of mass destruction. Nobody talks about that. Why should there be one standard for

one country, especially because it is black, and another one for another country, Israel, that is white." We call on all future coalitions, in the interest of world peace, to not be intimidated by the Zionist forces and to take a principled position against these double standards, as have the anti-war forces in most of the rest of the world. The huge anti-war protests all over the world on the second anniversary of the Palestinian intifada were an example of this principled unity.

To take a stand is the only way to defeat these useless rituals that serve only the status quo and do nothing to support the suffering people of Iraq and Palestine. We will not allow anybody to trample on or attempt to sabotage the true aspirations and interests of the Palestinian and Arab people.

**History Will Be Our Witness**