

The following open letter was sent on Feb.27, 2010 to Ontario Premier Dalton McGuinty and the Ontario MPPs under the title: Is It "O Canada" or "O Israel"?.

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## **Open Letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Ontario MPPs**

We learned with concern about the unanimous passing of a motion in the Ontario legislature (30/107 MPPs in attendance) introduced by Progressive Conservative MPP Peter Shurman (Thornhill) on Feb. 25, 2010 to condemn the annual Israel Apartheid Week <http://apartheidweek.org/> .

Mr. Shurman was quoted as saying that he wants **“the name changed. It's just wrong”** and that his resolution is about **“moral suasion”**, and that the term apartheid is **“close to hate speech...hateful”** and **“odious”**. He says he wants a **“respectful”** debate much more **“constructive”** than **“slinging slurs”**.

Finally he concluded **“it is also offensive to the millions of black South Africans oppressed by a racist white regime until the early 1990s”**

New Democratic MPP Cheri DiNovo (Parkdale-High Park) also claimed that the word apartheid is “inflammatory” and “used inappropriately in the case of Israel”. “Apartheid does not help the discussion”, she states.

<http://www.thestar.com/news/ontario/article/771761--mpps-decry-linking-israel-to-apartheid>

I would like to note that none of the attacks and slanders against the term “Israeli Apartheid” were substantiated or backed by any logical argument or reason. This has become a trend with the “Israeli Hasbara” (Israel Public Diplomacy) and the pro-Israel lobby where events and people, including Jewish Canadians, are arbitrarily slandered simply for exercising their right to free speech.

I am a Palestinian Christian from the Palestinian city of Bethlehem who survived Israel’s “Original Sin” that uprooted two thirds of the Palestinian people and wiped out over four hundred Palestinian towns and villages from the map of the world in 1947/1948. I am also one of the six million refugees who have been waiting for the past sixty-one years to return to their homes, lands and homeland. I am hurt and outraged at the morally bankrupt resolution of your Legislature. It adds insult to injury.

I challenge any one or more from these “honourable members” of the Ontario Legislature who voted for the resolution to a reasonable and rational debate, at anytime.

In the meantime I just want to tell Mr. Shurman, please do NOT speak in the name of the South African people. In contrast to your unfounded assertion (with no proof) that the term Israeli Apartheid is **“offensive to the millions of black South Africans”**, let me offer you the facts. The South African peoples and leaders are not offended by the Apartheid comparison, they do support the Palestinian struggle for liberation and if

anything is offensive to them, it is those who oppress the Palestinian people (the Israeli regime) and the unquestioning supporters of such ethnic cleansing and war crimes. To back my statement, I am including **some** quotes from South African leaders showing what they think of Israeli Apartheid. We are certain that your attempt to speak in the name of South Africans is without legitimacy and we also question if you are fairly representing the majority of Canadians. May you and your colleagues at the Ontario Legislature learn some truth, facts and humility and finally please remember that the Canadian national anthem is "O Canada", not "O Israel".

Hanna Kawas  
Chairperson, Canada Palestine Association, Vancouver  
[www.cpavancouver.org](http://www.cpavancouver.org)

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## **South African leaders on Israel and Apartheid**

"But we know too well that our freedom is incomplete without the freedom of the Palestinians." (1)

NELSON MANDELA

"I've been very deeply distressed in my visit to the Holy Land; it reminded me so much of what happened to us black people in South Africa. I have seen the humiliation of the Palestinians at checkpoints and roadblocks, suffering like us when young white police officers prevented us from moving about." (2)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

"When I hear, 'that used to be my home', it is painfully similar to the treatment in South Africa when coloureds had no rights". (3)

Archbishop Desmond Tutu

"...Israel came to resemble more and more apartheid South Africa at its zenith - even surpassing its brutality, house demolitions, removal of communities, targeted assassinations, massacres, imprisonment and torture of its opponents, collective punishment and the aggression against neighbouring states." (4)

Former South African Intelligence Minister Ronnie Kasrils from a speech at Israel Apartheid Week 2009

"But what is interesting is that every black South African that I've spoken to who has visited the Palestinian territory has been horrified and has said without hesitation that the system that applies in

**Palestine is worse." (5)**

Professor John Dugard, Former U.N. Special Rapporteur on Human Rights in Occupied Palestine

**"The horrendous dehumanisation of Black South Africans during the erstwhile Apartheid years is a Sunday picnic, compared with what I saw and what I know is happening to the Palestinian people." (6)**

Willie Madisha, former head of the Congress of South African Trade Unions (COSATU)

**"As someone who lived in apartheid South Africa and who has visited Palestine I say with confidence that Israel is an apartheid state. In fact, I believe that some of Israel's actions make the actions of South Africa's apartheid regime appear pale by comparison." (7)**

Willie Madisha, in a letter supporting CUPE Ontario's resolution.

**"I say with confidence that Israel is an Apartheid state. The trade union movement must move beyond resolutions, otherwise history will look back on us and spit on our graves." (8)**

Willie Madisha, at a trade union conference held in London, England.

**"Indeed, for those of us who lived under South African Apartheid and fought for liberation from it and everything that it represented, Palestine reflects in many ways the unfinished business of our own struggle." (9)**

Farid Esack, Writer, Visiting Professor at Harvard and Anti-apartheid Spokesperson

**"They support Zionism, a version of global racist domination and apartheid based on the doctrine that Jews are superior to Arabs and therefore have a right to oppress them and occupy their country." (10)**

Current COSATU President, Sidumo Dlamini

1 <http://www.anc.org.za/ancdocs/history/mandela/1997/sp971204b.html>

2 <http://www.guardian.co.uk/world/2002/apr/29/comment>

3 <http://www.commondreams.org/archive/2007/10/29/4872>

4 <http://www.bdsmovement.net/?q=node/347>

5 <http://www.thejerusalemfund.org/ht/d/ContentDetails/i/5240/pid/223>

6 <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/files/0802apartheid-factsheetFINAL.pdf>

7 <http://palsolidarity.org/2006/06/1228>

8 <http://www.palestinecampaign.org/images/Confrep2006.pdf>

9 [http://www.kibush.co.il/show\\_file.asp?num=33421](http://www.kibush.co.il/show_file.asp?num=33421)

10 <http://www.cosatu.org.za/docs/sp/2009/speech0326.html>