

The following letter was sent to Ontario MPP Peter Shurman (Thornhill) on March 11, 2010, in response to his reply to "Open letter to Premier Dalton McGuinty and Ontario MPPs".

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Open Reply to Mr. Shurman, Ontario MPP

I appreciate your courtesy in answering my letter "Is It O Canada or O Israel?", but I am baffled by your response and your logic. If you are truly concerned for your constituents, you will not hide the truth from them.

Regrettably, as in the debates around your original motion in the Ontario Legislature, you did not substantiate any of your statements in your email. You call for meaningful dialogue that is not prejudicial. I agree that dialogue should not be prejudicial, but I don't agree that the documented and scientific term "Apartheid" meaning separation is "prejudicial". However, what is prejudicial is one of the parties believing that they are a superior race and that God gave these superior rights and powers to them. Dialogue should be conducted among equals and with people who believe in equality and human dignity. I also agree with you that this dialogue should not be confined only to campuses, it should include all sectors of the Canadian society, including the Canadian media that does not care to present the Palestinian point of view, nor their suffering nor their "cries of hope". Have you seen any of the Canadian media report the "cry of hope" of the Christian Palestinians (Dec. 2009) to end the suffering, oppression and occupation of their people?

(<http://www.oikoumene.org/en/resources/documents/other-ecumenical-bodies/kairos-palestine-document.html>)

Perhaps the Ontario legislature should condemn the corporate media for being biased and one-sided towards Israel?!

You repeat in your email that "apartheid is prejudicial to any meaningful dialogue", that it is "wrong to ascribe such a term to the State of Israel" and that you "reject the use of the word 'apartheid' with respect to the democratic State of Israel." However, again, with no documentation to back your claims.

I tell you, as the victim of Israeli discriminatory policies, Israel is an apartheid state, Israel is not a democracy and exposing Israeli ethnic cleansing and war crimes against the Palestinian people is the duty of every decent human being. Again I am willing to publicly debate with you and document what I am saying. Are you willing to debate these issues? I offered that in my first open letter, but neither you nor any of the members of the Ontario legislature who voted for your motion responded positively.

Here is a concrete public offer. I am the co-host of the radio show called Voice of Palestine in Vancouver [www.voiceofpalestine.ca](http://www.voiceofpalestine.ca) and we are offering you a segment of 25-30 minutes to explain your position. We broadcast every Tuesday evening for one hour - pick any Tuesday most convenient to you. If you do not feel comfortable with such an interview, we welcome your written response to

the questions below and we will publicize them both on the radio and the Internet. Here are some of the questions I would be raising in any interview:

- The Israeli "Law of Return" applies only to Jews (Israelis or not) and does not apply to the twenty percent of Israeli citizens who are non-Jews, mainly Muslims and Christians. Is this law democratic or discriminatory?
- The "Absentee law" was used to rob the Palestinian people of their land when Israel was established, and now there is confiscation (robbery) of much of the West Bank land for illegal settlements, roads, the separation (Apartheid) wall and Israeli military bases. Are these actions democratic or are they part of the Ten Commandments "Thou shall not steal"?
- The Jewish National Fund JNF and its affiliates that control 93% of the total area of Israel does not lease or sell to Christian and Muslim Palestinians. Is this the democratic principles you are talking about and how would you describe these practices?
- What is the name of the Israeli Jewish author who wrote the book "Israel: An Apartheid State" in 1987?
- Is a state that allows for discrimination against women democratic? See: Invoking Rosa Parks, Haredi Women Move to Back of the Bus <http://www.forward.com/articles/13821/>
- A recent poll in the Jerusalem Post found that 50% of "Jewish Israeli schoolchildren" are against equal rights for Arabs, <http://www.jpost.com/Israel/Article.aspx?id=170735>. Do you think this has to do with their education at home, or school or the Israeli society in general?
- And finally, I might ask you to give only one quote from any Anti-Apartheid South African leader to prove your assertion that **"it is also offensive to the millions of black South Africans oppressed by a racist white regime until the early 1990s"**

Awaiting your reply,  
Hanna Kawas

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Subject: RE: Is It "O Canada" or "O Israel"?  
Date: Thu, 4 Mar 2010 15:56:01 -0500  
From: peter.shurman@pc.ola.org  
To: hkawas@msn.com

Thank you for your email regarding the resolution that I presented and debated with my fellow MPPs in the Ontario Legislative Assembly on February 25<sup>th</sup>.

Please allow me to remind you of two things.

Firstly, my job as the MPP for Thornhill is to take positions on issues that are of importance to my constituents. I would also add that sometimes we will agree and sometimes we won't.

Secondly, my argument is a simple one, even though others wish to expand upon it further. Simply put, I argue that the use of the term, "apartheid" is prejudicial to any meaningful dialogue before that dialogue even begins. Until all sides are represented in discussions on campuses and elsewhere, it is clear to me that the current starting point is not a level playing field.

Our objection is not to the discussion of the problems in the Middle East; it is that we reject the use of the word "apartheid" with respect to the democratic State of Israel.

The word, "apartheid" is assumptive and declaratory and assumes certain things. It is wrong to ascribe such a term to the State of Israel.

I stand by the resolution and maintain my motivation for bringing it forward.

Peter Shurman MPP (Thornhill)