

PALESTINE MEDIA COLLECTIVE • palestinemediacollective@gmail.com

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The Palestine Media Collective speaks out on CanWest parody

Local activists produced newspaper parody that satirised CanWest's anti-Palestinian bias

VANCOUVER - Today Carel Moiseiwitsch and Gordon Murray stated publicly that, as the Palestine Media Collective, they were the sole creators of the June 2007 newspaper parody of the Vancouver Sun. "We did not receive assistance from nor consult with any other individuals or organisations to conceive, produce or finance the parody," said Murray.

They also handed out on the streets of Vancouver copies of the 4-page satirical publication that "celebrated" the 40th anniversary of Israel's illegal occupation of the West Bank, Gaza Strip, East Jerusalem and Golan Heights. Murray was the media spokesperson for the parody.

The parody newspaper is the subject of a civil lawsuit by CanWest MediaWorks Publications Inc. that named Mordecai Briemberg, Horizon Publishing and six Jane and John Does in December 2007. The writ of summons was recently revised to include Murray and Moiseiwitsch.

The creators assert that the parody is constitutionally protected free speech and fair comment on matters of public interest. As last month's unanimous Supreme Court of Canada ruling stated, "the law must accommodate commentators such as the satirist or the cartoonist who ... exercise a democratic right to poke fun at those who huff and puff in the public arena."

Murray and Moiseiwitsch's full statement may be seen by the Georgia Straight's 318,000 weekly Metro Vancouver readers or on the web at <http://www.straight.com/article-153833/canwest-huffs-and-puffs-free-speech-burns?>>.

"The parody used humour and satire to point out the extreme anti-Palestinian bias of CanWest's news coverage," noted Moiseiwitsch. A study by the Near East Cultural Education Foundation found that CanWest's National Post was 83 times more likely to prominently report Israeli children's deaths than Palestinian children's deaths during 2004. <http://www.journalismproject.ca/en/attachments/NECEReportColour.pdf>

Prominent Canadian freedom of information organisations, including the BC Civil Liberties Association (BCCLA), Quebec's Ligue des droits et libertés and the Canadian Library Association, have called on CanWest to drop its lawsuit. A BCCLA open letter to CanWest stated "the BCCLA views the CanWest lawsuit to be an ill-advised attempt by CanWest to use the courts to silence satirical criticism and constrain fair comment."

Moiseiwitsch and Murray decided to produce the parody after a November 2006 trip to the Occupied Palestinian Territories to help Palestinian families harvest olives on their ancestral lands who were under threat of violence, intimidation and death by Israeli settlers and soldiers. "When we returned home to Vancouver we were appalled by CanWest's one-sided coverage of the Middle East," said Murray. A recent example is a March 3, 2008 National Post editorial that refers to the "Palestinian people as one collective suicide bomber."

"We welcome a debate on the crucial issues raised by the parody, including CanWest's bias against the Palestinians, media concentration and freedom of speech," said Moiseiwitsch.

"We refuse to be intimidated by CanWest's bullying tactics and will continue to exercise our charter right to express and publish our views," Murray added.

Carel Moiseiwitsch is a Vancouver activist and visual artist who has exhibited internationally. She was a freelance editorial illustrator for the Vancouver Sun and Province for over a decade. Gordon Murray is a Vancouver activist and information technologist who was involved in alternative publishing for more than 10 years. Both have worked to support indigenous rights in Canada and around the world for more than 20 years.

For more information or for an interview contact: palestinemediacollective@gmail.com.