

THE INTERNATIONAL ORGANIZATION FOR THE ELIMINATION OF ALL FORMS OF RACIAL DISCRIMINATION (EAFORD)

5 route des Morillons, CP 2100. 1211 Geneva 2, Switzerland
Telephone: (022) 788.62.33 Fax: (022) 788.62.45

STATEMENT

BY

The International Organization for the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination (EAFORD)

**To Durban Review Conference Preparatory Committee Second Substantive Session
15 October 2008**

UN Webcast of Statement

<http://www.un.org/webcast/unhrc/archive.asp?go=081015>

Name of Speaker: Dr. Diana Ralph, Coordinator, Independent Jewish Voices (Canada)

I am a Jewish Canadian from Independent Jewish Voices (Canada), which represents 18 Jewish groups across Canada. As Jews, we unconditionally endorse the WCAR Review Conference, and we are working to encourage Canada to reverse its decision to boycott these crucial proceedings. Historically, Jews have actively participated in struggles against all forms of discrimination. Because we take anti-Semitism seriously, we object to those who condemn legitimate criticism of Israeli's discriminatory policies as anti-Semitic.

The 2001 WCAR focused on many issues of racist policies and practices toward people of African descent, Aboriginal, Dalit, and Roma people, migrants, refugees, and asylum seekers. It addressed slavery, human trafficking and much more. It also called for action against the underlying causes of racism: poverty, war, and global inequality. The Durban Declaration and Programme of Action devoted less than 250 words (out of 180 pages) to concerns of Jews and Palestinians, all of which carefully balanced recognition of the rights of Jews and Israel with those of Palestinians. There was no anti-Semitic content in it. Like others, we condemn the isolated instances of anti-Semitic behavior by a few participants at the NGO conference, but note that these sentiments were overwhelmingly rejected by most NGOs and all state delegates. Similarly there is nothing anti-Semitic about this Preparatory meeting.

So what is the basis for the prevailing perception that Durban was "an anti-Semitic hate-fest"? Some NGO participants and government delegates challenged Israel's racist policies. The Israel Lobby (which includes many non-Jews and only represents a minority of Jews) has characterized these criticisms of Israel as "anti-Semitic." As Jews, we assert that it is entirely legitimate, and not anti-Semitic to object to Israeli policies that discriminate against Palestinians, not to mention occupying, torturing, assassinating and collectively punishing them. Those critical of the Review hope to discredit legitimate criticism of racist Israeli policies and practices, and to protect the United States, Canada, and some EU countries from being pressured to redress historic and ongoing racist practices.

We believe that Jews of conscience must stand in solidarity with all victims of racism. There is no justification for any form of racism, including anti-Black racism, anti-Semitism, anti-Arab racism, or Islamophobia, in any circumstances. The battle against anti-Semitism is vital and is threatened whenever opposition to Israeli government policies is automatically branded as anti-Semitic." We reject the views of

those who claim to speak on behalf of Jews who consistently put support for the policies of an occupying power above the human rights of an occupied people.

We say “Not in our name!” We hereby reclaim the tradition of Jewish support for universal freedoms, human rights, and social justice. We unconditionally support the Durban Review Conference.

Diana Ralph, Ph.D.

Independent Jewish Voices

ijv@magma.ca