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THIS WEEK'S TRIBUNE • **THIS WEEK'S TRIBUNE** Montreal Jewish community upset by controversial photo Gaza exhibit

Montreal Jewish community upset by controversial photo Gaza exhibit PDF PRINT EMAIL

Written by Mike Cohen
Wednesday, 24 February 2010

MONTREAL – The local Jewish community is upset over an exhibit focusing on the plight of the Palestinians after the Israeli action in the Gaza Strip last winter playing at the independent Cinema du Parc near the main McGill University campus.

On Jan. 15 the film Rachel, about a girl named Rachel Corrie who was crushed by an Israeli bulldozer in Gaza, was shown, along with the exhibit. While it is scheduled to continue until this coming Sunday, the landlord of the movie house has been attempting to get the show – called Human Drama in Gaza – cancelled.

A lawyer representing Gestion Redbourne PDP Inc. the property manager of the building, advised theatre management on Feb. 15 to remove the exhibit of 44 photos and other written information. Redbourne insisted that the space can only be used for cinematographic use. Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME), the producers of the exhibit, and Cinéma du Parc management refused to comply. As of this writing the exhibit remains in place.

CPJME legal advisor Mark H. Arnold said that such threat from Redbourne was not lawful. He asserted that the cinema's hosting of a photo exposition would very much constitute cinematographic use of the premises. Officials with Cinéma du Parc also pointed out that the cinema has hosted dozens of photo expositions in the past several years and has never had a complaint from Redbourne.

"This move on the part of Redbourne is clearly political," declared Thomas Woodley, president of CJPME. "Cinéma du Parc is known for its ongoing expositions, which touch on important issues of social concern, and Redbourne never had an issue in the past."

The exhibit pictures were taken during and after Israeli air strikes on Gaza in January 2009. They show signs of destruction from the Palestinian side, including one of a girl buried up to her neck in rubble and of a boy standing by his bulldozed house.

Moïse Moghrabi, Quebec chair of the League for Human Rights and vice-president of B'nai Brith Canada, is concerned about the exhibit.

"War is a horrible thing, but taking that horror and presenting it in pictures out of the context of war makes it even more of an atrocity," he said. "If Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East really had the intention of standing up for their name – justice and peace – they would have equally portrayed the horror of Israeli babies, children and innocent civilians ripped to pieces by Hamas terrorist bombs in Israeli public buses and places on otherwise peaceful days or killed in the hundreds of murderous terrorist attacks in the last years. Let's not kid ourselves. Their purpose is far from seeking 'peace and justice,' but rather a calculated one-sided promotion of hatred, which they manage to fuel through their exhibit. It's very sad to see them use those pictures for such a purpose."

Rabbi Chaim Steinmetz of Tifereth Beth David Jerusalem Congregation agrees.

"These photos show the tragedy of war, a tragedy from which there no averting our eyes," he said. "In actuality, the knowledgeable observer understands that these heartbreaking photographs underline the tragic consequences of Hamas' hatred of Israel, a hatred that has consumed Palestinians in civil war and reckless aggression. The sad part is that these photos are being used in support of the aggressors who started the war in Gaza; and isn't it funny how organizations like Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East never stage photo exhibits of genocide in Darfur or the oppressed Copts in Egypt, let alone the people of Sderot? No wonder the landlord is embarrassed by this attempt to misuse human tragedy for cheap propaganda."

Woodley countered by stating that the suffering of the 1.5 million people of Gaza is an important social issue like any other.

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Yes, it only invites unnecessary violence.

No, if God can be depicted, then so can Muhammed.

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