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## The Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid

[www.caiaweb.org](http://www.caiaweb.org)

Newsletter: February 21, 2012

### DEFEND PALESTINE HOUSE - ONE-MINUTE ACTION AND CAMPAIGN UPDATE

Earlier this week the Coalition Against Israeli Apartheid (CAIA) joined the strong and growing chorus of support in defense of Palestine House Educational and Cultural Centre, the most recent target of politically motivated funding cuts ordered by the Federal Minister of Citizenship and Immigration, Jason Kenney.



In a widely circulated news article titled "[Hitman Jason Kenney strikes again](#)", esteemed Toronto Star columnist and editorial page editor emeritus Haroon Siddiqui declared the almost \$1 million cuts to Palestine House funding to be "the government's latest scandal." As noted in the article, the Mississauga-based Palestine House Executive Director Feras Saleh confirmed that they had been "audited regularly and that Ottawa had found no irregularity, either financially or with the services provided." Despite a clear need, and a longstanding record of providing solid settlement and language instruction services to thousands of new immigrants since 1994, the federal government has nonetheless withdrawn the funding.

A Palestine House statement issued earlier this week confirmed that "Mr. Kenney did not provide any convincing explanation for his decision." Siddiqui concurs. Indeed, Kenney's decision is widely recognised as part of a systemic attack by the federal government on any funding related to organisations that support Palestinians or question the government's policies on Israel/Palestine. This move by the federal government is strikingly reminiscent of an almost identical attack on the Canadian Arab Federation whose funds for similar services were cut in 2009. CAF Lawyer Barbara Jackman states in the Toronto Star article that both organisations were undertaking "a completely apolitical activity - and both were doing a good job."

In both cases it is mainly the clients - mostly recent immigrants - and people who provide services to them who are affected by these cuts.

Siddiqui also notes that two other organisations, Kairos and Rights and Democracy, have also been victims of these concerted Kenney/Harper attacks.

However, the Conservative government has clearly underestimated the depth of people's commitment to justice, fairness and equality. Hundreds of signatures have accumulated in support of Palestine House in just a few days. This is a testament to the value of its services to the community, and to

people's recognition that this is a political attack.

While we continue to defend Palestine House and other organizations facing these attacks, we also need to remember that intimidation and silencing campaigns have not stopped the growth of the BDS movement in Canada. Just two weeks ago, the University of Regina Student Union (URSU) [voted to join the BDS movement](#). They are also now entering the cross-campus campaign aimed at pressuring Canadian university administrations to divest from Israeli companies. The URSU and SAIA Regina are the newest additions to this fast growing campus divestment movement. Initiated and led by Students Against Israeli Apartheid (SAIA), the divestment movement started at Carleton University in Ottawa (2010) and quickly expanded to the University of Toronto and York University in 2011. Israeli Apartheid Week and the student divestment campaigns also have the support of Faculty 4 Palestine, a network of over 500 academics from over 40 campuses across the country. Both the Canadian Union of Postal Workers (CUPW national) and the Ontario Canadian Union of Public Employees (CUPE) have also passed ground breaking resolutions in support of BDS. Israeli Apartheid Week (IAW), one of the biggest global BDS success stories, was held on 94 campuses and cities in 2011 only seven years after it began at the University of Toronto in 2005.

As public support for Palestine House continues to build, CAIA is issuing a call for signatures: Help defend Palestine House by writing to Jason Kenney. Let him know that attacking organisations which support the rights of Palestinians undermines the values of freedom of speech and expression which form the basis of a democratic society. Demand that he restore the commitment to funding these programs. This is a one minute action that can be done in five easy steps:

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STEP 1: Cut and paste into subject line: "Restore Funding to Palestine House"

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STEP 2: Cut and paste into body of e-mail (modify as you wish):

Dear Minister Kenney,

I oppose your decision to cut federal funding for the successful immigration settlement program administered by Palestine House. This decision is not based on the success of the program (which your department has recognized), but on ideology. I oppose any move by the Canadian government to penalize civil society and cultural organizations in Canada based on their legitimate views and concerns on human rights issues. This represents an attack on freedom of speech and freedom of expression which form the basis of a democratic society and is contributing to the steady criminalization of Palestine solidarity initiatives in Canada. I call on you to reverse your decision and to restore immediately the federal funding for Palestine House's immigration settlement program.

Sincerely,

YOUR NAME

YOUR ADDRESS

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STEP 3: Cut and paste Jason Kenney's email address,

[jason.kenney@parl.gc.ca](mailto:jason.kenney@parl.gc.ca)

[Minister@cic.gc.ca](mailto:Minister@cic.gc.ca)

into the To: line of your email

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STEP 4: Cut and paste your Federal MPs email address into the cc: line. You

can find it at

<http://www.parl.gc.ca/MembersOfParliament/MainMPsCompleteList.aspx>

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STEP 5: Cut and paste CAIA into "Bcc" line:

[endapartheid@riseup.net](mailto:endapartheid@riseup.net) and press Send

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For more information on this issue go to <http://www.palestinehouse.com/> or email [endapartheid@riseup.net](mailto:endapartheid@riseup.net)

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