

Press Release

Independent Jewish Voices condemns Canadian Prime Minister's Knesset speech in which he labeled criticism of the state of Israel as anti-Semitic

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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Independent Jewish Voices condemns Harper's attempt to exploit anti-Semitism in Knesset speech

OTTAWA- Independent Jewish Voices - Canada (IJV) is disturbed by Prime Minister Stephen Harper's remarks during his speech to the Israeli Parliament, in which he labeled criticism of the state of Israel as anti-Semitic. This is a grotesque misuse of the term, which describes hatred and violence towards Jews, not criticism of a government's policies.

"Harper has equated the state of Israel with the entire Jewish people. Then he claims that to criticize Israel is to attack Jews," says IJV spokesperson Tyler Levitan. "This is a continuation of Harper's outrageous efforts to disparage the Palestinian people, as well as the growing international solidarity movement that supports the non-violent Palestinian campaign to boycott, divest from and sanction Israel until Israel is willing to accept Palestinian rights."

Harper's government strongly supported the now defunct Canadian Parliamentary Coalition to Combat Anti-Semitism (CPCCA), a group of Canadian parliamentarians who aimed to make certain criticism of Israel become hate speech. IJV and several allied groups joined forces to defend free speech around this issue and expose the true purpose of the CPCCA. This successful campaign led to the CPCCA's dismantling.

"While Harper claims that Israel is being singled out by its critics, it is Harper who is in fact singling out Israel by insisting that it be immune from criticism," says Levitan. "Palestinian human rights activists support universal human rights for all people, so we are not singling out Israel. It is Harper, who refuses to challenge Israel's systematic human rights abuses, who is making an exception of Israel by exempting it from criticism."

Harper's visit to Israel is meant to pander to conservative Jewish voters as well as his large Evangelical Christian base. It is ironic that while Harper claims to oppose anti-Semitism, he has aligned himself with Evangelical Christians, many of whom believe that Israel must exist to promote the second coming of Jesus Christ, which would provide Jews with a choice between conversion to Christianity and eternal damnation.

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