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ONTARIO PRESS COUNCIL UNDERMINES KEY PREMISE OF GLOBE AND MAIL EDITORIAL

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

MONTREAL, Mar. 15 / – Yesterday, an Ontario Press Council (OPC) adjudication found that The Globe and Mail had no proof of the pivotal claim in its editorial entitled “See Hamas for what it is,” published February 15th, 2006.

The pivotal claim of the editorial was that an inflammatory 14 month old video had been presented *after* the Palestinian election on a presumed Hamas Website and that, based on this claim Canada should have no dealings with the newly elected Hamas-led Palestinian government.

The OPC found that the “editorial left the impression that” the video “had just been posted, when in fact there was no indication how long it had been on the site” and that “when the editorial was published The Globe and Mail did not have the information” to identify the site as Hamas’.

Despite the crucial nature of these findings, the OPC – an industry body – “dismissed with reservations” the complaints brought by CJPME and one other organization against the Globe about this editorial. The OPC ignored that the editorial implied that the Globe was using a primary source when in fact the Globe had relied exclusively on a secondary source, without attribution or corroboration. In addition the OPC failed to acknowledge that the ownership of the site remains contentious and that those portrayed on the video died in a combat operation not in suicide bombings. “Disturbingly, in its dismissal, the OPC failed to hold the Globe to the specific provisions in the OPC’s own Code of Conduct for editorials.” said Cam Robertson of Canadians for Justice and Peace in the Middle East (CJPME). “Thus, we are appealing the adjudication.”

CJPME believes that Canada should genuinely promote democracy and international law. Canada should have equal expectations of all sides in the Palestine-Israel conflict. All sides should renounce violence and abide by previous negotiated agreements.

In its complaint, CJPME argued that the Globe’s editorialist Marcus Gee had given full credence, without verification of, or citation to the unreliable, extremist Israeli website that was used as the sole source of key statements in the editorial. The editorialist claimed that “the international community should have no truck” with the newly-elected Hamas-led government. The Globe relied on spurious evidence to promote the isolation of the Palestinian people because of their electoral choice. At the same time, the editorial ignored the fact that Hamas had greatly tempered its position on Israel, and had successfully maintained a 14 month self-imposed ceasefire despite strong Israeli provocation.

The editorial – concluding that the West should cut off relations and withhold all aid from the Palestinian government – appeared at a critical time politically in Canada, just weeks after the election of Canada’s new minority Conservative government and shortly before it announced its position on the Palestinian election, a position identical to that advocated in the Globe editorial.

CJPME believes that Canada's blocking of aid constitutes collective punishment, contributing to the massive poverty and widespread misery experienced by Palestinian civilians. Through its actions, Canada undermined democracy and squandered opportunities to encourage further moderation by the Palestinian government. Ultimately, the Canadian government damaged prospects for justice, development, security and peace for both Palestinians and Israelis.

"Canadians expect high standards from their media," stated Rula Odeh, a member of the CJPME leadership team. "This is not about the latitude needed to express an editorial opinion; this is about maintaining high journalistic integrity in providing informed opinions. Relying on extremist, uncorroborated sources and viewpoints – from either the Palestinian or Israeli side – promotes a skewed perspective on Canadian foreign policy... with serious consequences."

The OPC has issued its adjudication to all its member newspapers. All of the CJPME files related to the complaint and the proceedings can be found at www.cjpme.ca/opc.shtml. The adjudication text will also appear in The Globe and Mail, as well as on the OPC Website www.ontpress.com. The OPC Code for editorials is on the OPC site.

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About CJPME

CJPME is a pan-Canadian grassroots advocacy organization uniting Canadians of all backgrounds who believe in justice, peace and security for all people in the Middle East. CJPME seeks to positively influence Canadian foreign policy in the Middle East and Canadian media coverage of the events and peoples of the region. CJPME values Canada's historical role as a neutral broker in the Middle East, and wants to promote better understanding among Canadians of Middle Eastern issues and dynamics.

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